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# The military career of Colonel William Ranson Johnson Pegram, C.S.A.

Beverly Blair McDowell

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## PREFACE

The study of the military career of Colonel William Ransom Johnson Pegram has been a fascinating one for me indeed. If I were to list the characters of American History who reside in my own private "hall of fame", the name of William Pegram would rank high. Although the mention of him does not evoke universal recognition, it is evident that this young man demonstrated during the brief drama of his life, those qualities of simple virtue and courage which make men great.

My initial introduction to Colonel Pegram was facilitated by the reading of Lee's Lieutenants, that monumental work on the Army of Northern Virginia, by Doctor Douglas Southall Freeman. One obscure footnote on page 674, volume III attracted my attention and imagination. Doctor Freeman states in this subscript that "Willie" Pegram deserves a biography. This study is an attempt to partially meet that challenge; however, I use the word "partially", for a complete biography would of necessity include more materials on the subject's early life. The major emphasis here is on his military career in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

The writer has been to every battlefield and personally observed the ground where Colonel Pegram did battle with his guns.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EARLY LIFE .....	1
Birth (June 29, 1841) .....	1
Family .....	1
Home .....	6
Education .....	11
II. FROM MANASSAS TO FREDERICKSBURG.....	20
Enters the Confederate Service (April 18, 1861) .....	20
First Manassas Campaign (July 16 - 21, 1861) .....	22
Action at Marlborough Point (August 23, 1861) .....	23
Peninsular Campaign (March 2 - August 14, 1862) .....	24
Second Manassas Campaign (August 7 - September 2, 1862) .....	32
Maryland Campaign (September 3 - 17, 1862) .....	40
Fredericksburg Campaign (November 9 - December 15, 1862) .....	44
III. FROM CHANCELLORSVILLE TO FIVE FORKS .....	51
Chancellorsville Campaign (April 27 - May 6, 1863) .....	51
Gettysburg Campaign (June 2 - July 4, 1863) .....	56
Wilderness to Cold Harbor (May 4 - June 3, 1864) .....	62
Siege of Petersburg (June 14 - April 1, 1865) .....	65
Five Forks (April 1, 1865) .....	72
IV. CONCLUSION .....	77
Reinterment in Hollywood (December 6, 1865) .....	77
Pegram Battalion Association .....	78
An Evaluation .....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	82

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE

Although the main focus of this study will be on the military career of Colonel Pegram in the Confederate Army, it seems appropriate to point out various facts which pertain to his pre-military life.

#### I. BIRTH

William Ransom Johnson Pegram was born in Richmond, Virginia on June 29, 1841.<sup>1</sup> He was the third of five children born to General James West Pegram and Virginia Ann (Johnson) Pegram.<sup>2</sup>

#### II. FAMILY

William's paternal grandfather, General John Pegram, was the son of Captain Edward Pegram of the Revolutionary Army who had served as a juror on the trial of Aaron Burr.<sup>3</sup> General John Pegram served as a member of the Virginia Assembly, 1798-1799; as a Major General of Virginia Forces in the War of 1812; as United States Marshall of the Eastern District of Virginia; and as a member of the United States Congress, 1818-1819.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "Biographies of Virginians " (MSS in the Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia), Microfilm LE-SM, alphabetically arranged. Petersburg, Virginia is given as the place of birth in the Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of William Ransom Johnson Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor, nee Pegram (MSS in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina); however, this seems unlikely in view of the fact that both of these manuscripts state that General James West Pegram moved to Richmond in 1840.

2. Ibid

3. Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies: A Genealogy of Glassell Family of Scotland and Virginia, also of the Families of Ball, Brown, Bryan, Conway, Daniel, Ewell, Holaday, Lewis, Littlepage, Moncure, Peyton, Robinson, Scott, Taylor, Wallace, and Others, of Virginia and Maryland (Baltimore; Southern Book Company, 1959), p. 314.

4. Ibid. p. 314

William's father, General James West Pegram, was the second son of General John Pegram by his second marriage, and upon completing his academic course became deputy to his father during his term as United States Marshall of the Eastern District of Virginia.<sup>5</sup> By a rigid economy he accumulated enough money to pay his expenses as a student of law at Harvard University, and for a time after receiving his diploma held the Judge Story Chair as Professor of Law in that institution.<sup>6</sup> He later moved to Petersburg, Virginia, where "he rose to distinction as a lawyer, financier, and spirited citizen."<sup>7</sup> In 1832 he lectured at the Petersburg Lyceum on Law.<sup>8</sup> Though he was too young for the War of 1812, and did not live to see the Mexican War of 1846, he was appointed Colonel and then Brigadier General of the Virginia Militia some time during the years between these dates.<sup>9</sup> In 1840, the Bank of Virginia in Richmond suffered a defalcation, and at the invitation by the Directory through the President, he became the Cashier.<sup>10</sup>

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5. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram."

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

9. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram."

10. Ibid.; Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram," by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

He succeeded Dr. John Brockenburg to the presidency of the Bank in 1842,<sup>11</sup> and in March of that year, General Pegram was one of a group that entertained the celebrated English novelist, Charles Dickens, at a "'petite souper' held in the Exchange Hotel."<sup>12</sup> In October of 1844, Pegram "started for New Orleans on a business trip connected with the Bank, and on some of a more personal kind for his plantations partly owned by him on the Mississippi...."<sup>13</sup> He was killed on the ill-fated steamboat "Lucy Walker", when its boilers exploded at New Albany on the Ohio River.<sup>14</sup> He could have escaped with the majority of the passengers, but he went below to look for a lady and her children.<sup>15</sup> "He went down with the boat," wrote Samuel Bassett French, and "his remains were never recovered."<sup>16</sup> In a tribute to him, the Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser stated that "Rarely has a community been more sadly impressed by any similar event than this... We doubt if a finer specimen could have been found of Virginia gentlemen of the olden time, or a superior model of what a son, a father, a husband, a friend, or a citizen ought to be."<sup>17</sup>

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11. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram."

12. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

13. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram."

14. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor; Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser, November 1, 1844.

15. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James Pegram"; Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p. 314.

16. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram."

17. "Death of Gen. Pegram, President of Bank of Virginia," in the Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser, November 1, 1844.

The Board of Directors also paid a tribute of respect to General Pegram which<sup>18</sup>  
was published by the Richmond Whig and Advertiser.

William Pegram's mother, Mrs. Virginia Ann (Johnson) Pegram, was  
the daughter of Colonel William Ransom Johnson, known as the "Napoleon of  
the Turf," because of his "famous race horses."<sup>19</sup> It is this grandfather for  
whom William was named. Prior to the Civil War, Richmond was a city of many  
private schools, and Mrs. Pegram headed such an institution for young ladies<sup>20</sup>  
during the years from 1855 to 1866, in Linden Row, 106-108 Franklin Street.  
She also served in the Southern Female Institute, which was located on the<sup>21</sup>  
same block. Her specialty appears to have been music education.<sup>22</sup> She out-  
lived her husband and three sons, dying on February 28, 1888.<sup>23</sup>

William Pegram had two older brothers who also served in the Army of  
Northern Virginia. The eldest, John, an 1854 graduate of West Point served  
in the U.S. Army until April, 1861, when he resigned and offered his services  
to the Confederacy. He was killed at Hatcher's Run on February 6, 1865,<sup>24</sup>  
eighteen days after his marriage to Hetty Cary of Baltimore.

18. "Tribute of Respect-Office of the Bank of Virginia," in the  
Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser, November 12, 1844.

19. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Virginia  
Ann (Johnson) Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

20. Margaret Meagher, History of Education in Richmond (Richmond:  
Virginia Division of the Works Progress Administration Adult Education Project  
1939), p. 72.

21. Ibid., p. 73

22. Ibid.

23. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Virginia Ann  
(Johnson) Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

24. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Brigadier  
John Pegram," Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p. 314.

James West Pegram was the second oldest of the Pegram brothers, and<sup>25</sup> he rose to the rank of major in the Confederate Army. He entered the army early in 1861 as a member of the Richmond Grays, but served for a time as adjutant to General John H. Winder in the recruiting office at Richmond, as<sup>26</sup> well as on the staffs of Generals Lewis A. Armistead and Richard S. Ewell. After the war he was engaged in business in Richmond, but later moved to New<sup>27</sup> York City to become the General Travelling Agent for the Lorillards. He<sup>28</sup> died on March 31, 1881 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Willie Pegram had two younger sisters, and they both married Confederate officers. Mary Evans Pegram was the second wife of Brigadier General Joseph R. Anderson, the owner of the famed Tredegar Iron Works in<sup>29</sup> Richmond.

The younger sister, Virginia Johnson Pegram married William's friend, Colonel David Gregg McIntosh of the artillery on November 8, 1865.

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25. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Major James West Pegram," by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

26. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Major James West Pegram;" Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p.314; News item in the Daily Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, March 18, 1865;

27. Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p. 314.

28. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Major James West Pegram."

29. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of Mary Evans Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor; Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p.314; Elizabeth Wright Weddell, St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia, Its Historic Years and Memorials (Richmond: The William Byrd Press, Inc., 2 Vols., 1931), Vol. II, p.458; Margaret Meagher, History of Education in Richmond, p. 72.



They later moved to Towson, Maryland, where McIntosh practiced law for some  
 30  
 years.

### III. HOME

When General James West Pegram moved his family to Richmond in 1840, they took up residence "in the house on West Franklin Street, on the South West Corner at Adams Street, owned by Robert Gwathney, and later by Wm. F. Taylor."  
 31  
 The home atmosphere in which Willie Pegram was nurtured, "re-  
 32  
 flected the cultivated life...of elegant refinement...(and) hospitality."

Shortly after General Pegram's death in the year 1844, Mrs. Pegram  
 33  
 moved the family to 106-108 East Franklin Street in Linden Row. In 1860, while living at this address, William was employed as a deputy clerk at the  
 34  
 circuit court in Richmond.

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30. Ibid., Vol. I, p.278; Pegram Family Papers, "A Sketch of Virginia Johnson Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor; Elizabeth Wright Weddell, St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia, Its Historic Years and Memorials, Vol. I, p.278; Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p.314.

31. Horace Edwin Hayden, Virginia Genealogies, p. 314.

32. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

33. W. Eugene Ferslew (Comp.), Second Annual Directory for the City Of Richmond, to which is added a Business Directory for 1860, (Richmond, Virginia: Published by W. Eugene Ferslew. W.Wirt Turner, Printer, 1860), p.177.

34. Ibid. p. 177

This is all that can be determined by the writer with the few sources now available, for "he would not have been on an official payroll as we know them. The court clerks were entirely on a fee basis, and they were personally responsible for the number of deputies they hired to care for the court's business, and for their salaries." <sup>35</sup> William does state in a letter to his brother John dated January 25, 1860, that he had recently returned from Charlestown, and that "...as I was absent from the office two weeks, my work got so much behind hand..Mr. Ellett was absent as well as myself." <sup>36</sup> The "Mr. Ellett" is evidently Mr. James Ellett, who was the circuit court clerk in Richmond at this time. <sup>37</sup>

The John Brown Raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia on the night of October 16, 1859, evidently inspired many young men of Richmond to join local militia companies. <sup>38</sup> In his letter to his brother John, dated January 25, 1860, he states "You never saw anything like the military and patriotic feeling now existing in the South. Before the Harper's Ferry outbreak this Regiment could not muster over three hundred and fifty men", "now we have about seven hundred and fifty, of which number six hundred and fifty are uniformed alike, (in the gray)." <sup>39</sup>

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35. John E. Damerel, Director of Personnel for the City of Richmond, Virginia, to the writer, June 24, 1964, from Richmond, Virginia.

36. William J. Pegram to his brother, John Pegram, January 25, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia (MSS in the Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia), I P 3496 a, Box 2.

37. F. Johnson (comp.), Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks, Arranged Alphabetically by Counties With Complete Index of Names and Dates of Service from 1634 To The Present Time (Lynchburg, Va.: J.P. Bell Company, 1888) PP.212,328.

38. J.G. Randall, and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (second edition; Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1961), p. 125

39. William J. Pegram to his brother John Pegram, January 25, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia, (in Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.

The regiment to which Willie refers is the First Virginia, of which Company "F" of Richmond (Willie's Company) was a part.<sup>40</sup> The organizational date of this company is listed as October 19, 1859;<sup>41</sup> and it left for Harper's Ferry on that date to meet the threat of John Brown.<sup>42</sup> When the governor returned to Richmond on October 21, 1859, Company "F", seventy-five strong, under the command of Captain R. Milton Cary, escorted him from the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad Depot to the governor's mansion at Capitol Square.<sup>43</sup> The governor returned thanks to Captain Cary and Company "F" "for the promptness with which his orders were obeyed when the news came that the arsenal at Harper's Ferry had been taken....In fifty minutes from the time his order was given", the Daily Dispatch reported, "Company F was with him, ready for the scene of action, prepared to do their duty as citizen-soldiers."<sup>44</sup> Virginia was preparing for any eventuality as evidenced by a law passed in January of 1860, by the Virginia Legislature "making appropriations for the purchase and manufacture of arms and munitions of war. We are satisfied that it is fully responsive to the aroused wishes of the people of Virginia."<sup>45</sup>

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40. Charles T. Loehr, War History of the Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer, 1884), p. 6; By Various Hands, Richmond, Capital of Virginia, Approaches to its History (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1938), pp. 306-07.

41. Charles T. Loehr, War History of the Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia, p. 6.

42. Daily Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, October 19, 1859.

43. Daily Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, October 22, 1859.

44. Ibid., October 22, 1859

45. Richmond Enquirer, Richmond, Virginia, January 24, 1860.

A military convention of Virginia met on January 10, 1860, in the ball room of the Exchange Hotel at Richmond, with fifty-two regiments of infantry, calvary, and artillery represented, "to enquire into and devise a proper military system for the State,,,"<sup>46</sup> These are the kinds of events which impressed Pegram. He continued in the letter to his brother by stating that "Mr. Joseph R. Anderson has a fine Cavalry Corps of about a hundred men. Mr. Geo. W. Randolph has a Howitzer Company of about the same number. Mr. Wyndham Robertson has gotten up an Infantry Corps of about a hundred and fifty men." The infantry corps was called the "Home Guard," and it was composed of men over forty-five years of age. "The excitement has very much died out in this State now, but the people are very firm", Willie continues, "and the Southern trade hereafter will depend much more on the Southerners than on the Northerners."<sup>47</sup>

Washington's Birthday in 1860 was one of military display in Richmond. In a letter to his cousin John Pegram, Willie relates that, "The 22nd of February was a very bad day with us, nevertheless we had a very fine military parade. But I paid very dearly for my fun, for I have been very unwell ever since and am now confined to the house."<sup>48</sup> The Richmond Enquirer reported that "Dark clouds, with heavy rain, ushered in the day-as gloomy as that which, in a national aspect, lowered upon our forefathers in a sterner gathering", and a description in more detail is further given here in that, "The streets were sloppy as they could be. The adhesive mud around the walks of the Capitol was over shoetops in some places..."<sup>49</sup>

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46. News item in the Richmond Enquirer, Richmond, Virginia, January 13, 1860.

47. William J. Pegram to his brother John Pegram, January 25, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia (in Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers,) Box 2.

48. Wm. J. Pegram to his cousin John Pegram, March 8, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia, (in Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers) Box 2.

49. Richmond Enquirer, Richmond, Virginia, February 24, 1860.

The Fayette Artillery heralded the approach of the day with, "the loud booming of guns... from the Southern portico of the Capitol Square," and "at an early hour the State and national flags were displayed on the flag-staffs of the State house..." The First Virginia Infantry Regiment formed on Broad Street opposite the City Hall at 3 P.M., after which it marched to the Capitol Square under the Command of Colonel Thomas P. August, in the following order: State Guard, Grays, Co. F, Co. B, Montgomery Guard, Blues, Co.G, Co.K, and Virginia Rifles. There were five hundred and twenty-seven men in line, "and the display, in a military point of view, exceeded any previous display of the Regiment..." Richmonders were very proud of the First Regiment, and the Daily Dispatch exhorted the people that they should "not forget to approve most heartily the new and rigid discipline introduced in the companies for the regulation of the morale of their organization..."<sup>50</sup> With all of the bad weather and the illness Willie Pegram suffered as a participant in the affair with Company "F", he still considered it "fun".<sup>51</sup> This enthusiasm for the militia company would serve him well in days to come.

While a resident of Petersburg, General James West Pegram was a vestryman of Bristol Parish, and a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in that city.<sup>52</sup>

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50. Daily Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, February 23, 1860.

51. Wm. J. Pegram to his cousin John Pegram, March 8, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia (in the Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.

52. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.

When the Pegram family moved to Richmond, they were received into the membership of Monumental Episcopal Church under the ministry of The Right Reverend Richard Channing Moore.<sup>53</sup> It was at this place of worship that William Pegram<sup>54</sup> was baptized on March 31, 1842, by the Reverend N.H. Cobbs.<sup>54</sup> On October 10, 1843, the corner stone of the new Saint Paul's Episcopal Church was laid at the corner of Grace and Ninth Streets, and General Pegram was one of a group from the Monumental Church who had made it possible. He was one of thirty-eight members of the Monumental congregation who executed a bond on July 26, 1843 which stipulated "that they would pay pro rata, as called for, for money necessary to build and complete the church, agreeing to take their chances for reimbursement from the proceeds of the sale of pews after the completion of the new church.."<sup>55</sup> Little Willie Pegram was only four years old when his new church home was dedicated on November 4, 1845, and it was here that he received his early religious training.

#### V. EDUCATION

Outside of Samuel Bassett French's statement that Willie Pegram was educated "at the best schools" in Richmond, there appears to be no references to his secondary education in the available sources.<sup>56</sup>

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53. Ibid.; Geo. D. Fisher, History And Reminiscences of the Monumental Church, Richmond, Virginia, From 1814 to 1878 (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1880), p. 199.

54. Geo. D. Fisher, History and Reminiscences of the Monumental Church, Richmond, Virginia, from 1814 to 1878, p.200.

55. Elizabeth Wright Weddell, St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia, Its Historic Years and Memorials, pp. 14,15, 18.

56. Samuel Bassett French Papers, "A Biographic Sketch of William Ransom Johnson Pegram".

Willie had stated in a letter to his brother John in January, 1860, that  
 "I am very anxious to see you to have a talk about the University next year."<sup>57</sup>  
 Whether this conference materialized or not, Willie did matriculate at the  
 University of Virginia on October 8, 1860, as a student in the Law School.<sup>58</sup>  
 He would board at a Mr. Hamner's.<sup>59</sup> He enrolled in the Junior and Senior  
 Classes of Professor James P. Holcombe, LL.D., who headed the "Department  
 of Civil, Constitutional and International Law, and Government, Etc."<sup>60</sup> His  
 required studies would include, "Lectures on Government, Federalist, Duer's  
 Outlines of the Constitution, Madison's Report 1799, Polson's Law of Nations,  
 Select Chapters of Vattel's Law of Nations...Smith's Mercantile Law, Green-  
 leaf's Evidence, Barton's Suit in Equity", and "Adams' Equity."<sup>61</sup> Students  
 such as A.S. Pendleton, W. Gordon McCabe, J.H. Maury, Celsus Price, and  
 R.E. Lee, Jr. enrolled for the same session.<sup>62</sup>

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57. William J. Pegram to his brother John Pegram, January 25, 1860, from Richmond, Virginia (in Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.

58. University of Virginia Matriculation Register, 1856-1868-No.2 (MSS in the Alderman Library, Manuscript Division, University of Virginia), October 8, 1860, 170th name, (Calendar arrangement).

59. Ibid. This no doubt refers to Mr. Wyatt W. Hamner who is listed in the Catalogue of the University of Virginia, Session of 1859-'60 (Richmond, Virginia: Chas. H. Wynne, 1860), p.7., as one of the "Hotel-Keepers within the University."

60. University of Virginia Matriculation Register, 1856-1868, No. 2 (MSS in the Alderman Library, Manuscript Division, University of Virginia), October 8, 1860, 170th name; Catalogue of the University of Virginia, Session of 1860-'61, (Richmond, Virginia, Chas. H. Wynne, 1860) pp. 36, 37.

61. Catalogue of the University of Virginia, Session of 1860-'61 (Richmond, Virginia: Chas H. Wynne, Printer, 94 Main Street, 1861), pp. 36-37.

62. University of Virginia Matriculation Register, 1856-1868-No.2 (MSS in the Alderman Library, Manuscript Division, University of Virginia),

A.S. Pendleton was the son of William Nelson Pendleton; the latter would become General R.E. Lee's Chief of Artillery and Pegram's superior in that arm. 63  
 J.H. Maury was the son of Matthew Fontaine Maury, and Celsus Price was the son of Sterling Price; the latter, an ex-governor of Missouri, would become a General in the Confederate Service. R.E. Lee, Jr., of course, was the son of General, then Colonel, R.E. Lee. Of these, W. Gordon McCabe would become a devoted comrade of Willie Pegram, and would serve as his adjutant in the Confederate Artillery. 64  
 Willie was nineteen years of age at this time, and Gordon McCabe some years later gave a description of him at this period of his life in the following words:

He was...reserved almost to shyness, grave and gracious in his manner, in which there was little of primness and much of the charm of an old fashioned politeness. His apparent shyness was owing, doubtless, partly to the modesty of his nature. To those students who were not his intimates, but happened to meet him occasionally in the rooms of common friends, it was often a matter of wonder and remark how keen a sense of humor there was in this quiet, sober-looking lad, who assuredly yielded to no one in this thorough appreciation of the most delicate witticism. 65

It is stated in the Pegram Family Papers that, "As a law student at the University of Virginia, he was recognized by his fellow students as of unusual spirituality. Timid, retiring, yet possessed of the sternest qualities of the born leader was William R.J. Pegram." 66

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63. Ibid; E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of A Confederate (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, with a new introduction and notes by T. Harry Williams), p.158.

64. University of Virginia Matriculation Register, 1856-1868-No.2, October 2,3,5,8,1860.

65. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe (2 Vols; Richmond, Virginia; Old Dominion Press, Inc., Publishers, 1925), I,p.160

66. Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of William Ransom Johnson Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor.



Willie was evidently a serious student at the University, as evidenced by his personal attitudes expressed to his sister Jennie (Virginia Johnson Pegram) in a letter dated November 10, 1860. In view of the impending clouds of war, he writes in lamentation, "It seems as if there was bound to be some fatality attending my course at the University. But I hope that I will not have to leave..." In another paragraph of the same letter he reveals devotion to his books in stating, "There was a very large party at Mr. Minor's (no doubt Professor John B. Minor of the Law School) last night. I was invited but didn't go. An altho' I was in hearing of all that was going on, I managed to study through the whole of it."

67

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina adopted its ordinance of secession. Shortly after this event, the students at the University organized two military companies of volunteers. The faculty had discouraged such a formation before, but seeing the agitation of the public mind "both before and after the Presidential election (of Lincoln), they concluded that the hour had arrived for lifting the ban."

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67. William J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, November 10, 1860, from the University of Virginia (in Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

68. J.G. Randall, and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 136.

69. Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919, The Lengthened Shadow of One Man (4 Vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), III, p.265.

Willie Pegram "became at once an active promoter of the enterprise. He entered the first company formed, known as 'The Southern Guard', and was appointed 1st. Sergeant." "He was then", related W. Gordon McCabe, "a capital infantry soldier, having been for two years a member of the famous 'Company F' of Richmond, and proved untiring in drilling his men."<sup>70</sup> The other company was organized under the name "Sons of Liberty", which had been suggested by Willie's professor, Thomas B. Holcombe, "in recollection of the heroes of the Revolution." Each of these units had its own distinctive uniform. The "Southern Guard"(Willie's Company), adopted an attire which, "consisted of a blue shirt and blue pantaloons, with a cap of the same distinctive color." The weapons of both companies were identical:"a flintlock musket, cartridge box, bayonet, and scabbard.";however neither had a banner at first nor wind instruments, which were unprocurable. The young soldiers,"in the course of drill, marched to the sound of the hip hip of the officers."<sup>71</sup> Each of these companies contained approximately seventy men, and the ground on which they drilled was either "the Lawn" or Carr's Hill.<sup>72</sup>

Several days following the election of Abraham Lincoln, Pegram expressed himself on current events, in a letter to his sister Jennie he said:

"I look upon disunion as certain, and wouldn't be surprised if I were ordered away at any time." "It is perfectly dreadful, to think of our united, afflicted country", "On the one side we have a President opposed to us in every way, and a Vice-President who is to preside over that August body, the Senate of the United States, a half negro, and the Germans for our masters. While on the other side we have disunion.

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70. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of Williams Gordon McCabe, I, p.159.

71. Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919, III, p.265.

72. Ibid., III, p.267

The greatest evil foreseen by Pegram is what he termed: "'A Civil War' staring us in the face."<sup>73</sup> "Isn't it perfectly dreadful?", he exclaimed. "All we can

do is to hope that 'God of all Nations' will direct all things for the best."

He asked his sister to excuse his running on so foolishly on a political subject, "but this is a time when we ought to be thinking seriously about it."

<sup>74</sup>  
It is not a mere Jno. Brown's raid."

In a letter to his sister Mary (Mary Evans Pegram) dated February 18, 1861, William reveals his interest in the use of good grammar and his distaste for academic snobbery. "There is a saying here," he relates, "that when a student comes back the third year he is very 'stuck up'." He believed he had seen a demonstration of this kind of thing the day before, when he corrected a young man in his grammar, "and we got into a discussion on the subject."

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73. J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p.133; William J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, November 10, 1860, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1. According to Clement Eaton, A History of the Old South (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), p.574, "It was widely rumored among the ignorant classes of the South that Hannibal Hamlin, the Republican Vice-President, was a mulatte"; however, Pegram was vulnerable to this propaganda, and he could hardly be called "ignorant"; Carl Sandburg, in Abraham Lincoln: The War Years (4 vols. New York: Harcourt, Bruce and Company, 1939), I, p.155, gives a detailed account of this issue. According to J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp.2, 234, there was a strong reaction of native Americans of the "Knownothing" or "American" and Whig Parties against the large number of Germans immigrating to the mid-west, who were believed to be strongly Republican, antislavery, and Unionist in sentiment; Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor, in the Pegram Family Papers, "A Biographical Sketch of General James West Pegram," states that William's father and many members of the family were Whigs.

74. William J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, November 10, 1860, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

"After I had argued to show that he was wrong," Willie continues, "he told me that 'he had been at college three years & he ought to know.' This is considered to be a very smart fellow."

Pegram continued writing to his sister Mary with his charactersitic apology for mentioning politics, "I will venture to ask you if you are satisfied with the Guthrie Proposition in the Peace Congress?"<sup>75</sup> At the writing of this letter, six southern states had already left the Union by ordinances of secession, and the Peace Congress referred to by Pegram, was undoubtedly the conference of twenty-one states which assembled in Washington on February 4, 1861 at the call of the Virginia Legislature in an attempt to avert war.<sup>76</sup> The Guthrie Proposition which he mentions must refer to the compromise efforts of James Guthrie at the convention. It has been said that, "a former Secretary of the Treasury, James Guthrie of Kentucky proposed the most important feature of convention procedure, a committee of one from each state charged with the duty of considering all suggested resolutions." James A. Seddon retorted that this proposal was not in keeping with the one made by "the Old Dominion legislature...he contended that shifting responsibility to a committee merely delayed consideration by the entire membership." The Guthrie proposition won out.<sup>77</sup>

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75. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, February 18, 1861, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

76. J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 136-41.

77. Robert G. Gernderson, "The Old Gentlemen's Convention," Civil War History, VII (March, 1961), pp. 9-10

The Convention presented to Congress "a plan of conciliation involving seven amendments to the Constitution...the plan resembled the abortive Crittenden compromise..."<sup>78</sup> "As far as I can see, it is no improvement whatever on the Constitution," Willie confided to his sister, "and to read the Constitution one would think that we had every guarantee in the world..." Pegram concludes, "but what guarantees will we have that they will be observed, more than the Constitution? None whatever as far as I can see."<sup>79</sup>

In referring to the special session of the Virginia Legislature which assembled in Richmond February 13, 1861 at the call of Governor John Letcher, Willie wrote rather pessimistically to his sister Mary, "If you have yet been to the Convention, I don't suppose you found it very interesting, as they seem disposed to consume all the time in elections of door keepers, & in personal explanations."<sup>80</sup> As a result, The Convention did vote down a motion to draw up an ordinance of secession on April 4, 1861, by a vote of 88 to 45, and the body on April 6, made a final effort to avert secession by sending a committee to confer with President Lincoln. These efforts were offset by the firing of Confederate batteries on Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861. On hearing the news, President Lincoln issued a proclamation on April 15, 1861,<sup>81</sup> calling for seventy-five thousand volunteers to put down the insurrection.

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78. J.G. Randall, and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction p.151.

79. William J. Pegram to his sister, Mary Evans Pegram, February 18, 1861, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers) Box 1.

80. Henry T. Shanks, The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861 (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett & Massey, Inc., 1934), pp. 155-56; William J. Pegram to his sister, Mary, February 18, 1861, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers,) Box 1.

81. J.G. Randall, and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction pp.181-82. Ibid., p. 182, Ibid., p.182

82

Virginia seceded on April 17, 1861.

The disunion which Willie Pegram had perceived, was now a fact, As with many young men throughout the South, he was anxiously alert to the call of his state. This was evident in the letter to his sister Jennie in November, when he wrote, "Tell Jimmy (his brother James West Pegram) I wish he would, if there should be any intimation to the troops to hold themselves in readiness, get all my uniform together and telegraph me immediately, I think it is all in the wardrobe. In case of a row, I believe the Faculty will suspend lectures, and pay the students back their money for the time over which they have not gone..."<sup>83</sup>

The students at the University had for sometime been involved personally with the prospect of war; Gordon McCabe explained, "Well, do I remember the eager discussions we boys then held touching the great events which Fate seemed hurrying on. Pegram, naturally shy and silent, said but little," then rather poetically, "but when the storm burst, like Macduff,<sup>84</sup> his voice was in his sword."

The call came! Pegram forsook the quietude of a classroom in the University for the wild terror of that strange and awesome laboratory of war's science--the battlefield. Gordon McCabe, in referring to Lincoln's call for troops, said: "From that moment books were little thought of at the University; all were eager to exchange gown for sword."<sup>85</sup>

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82. Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, I, p.701.

83. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, February 18, 1861, from the University of Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

84. William Gordon McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion to the Battalion-From Mother of Col. Pegram"-Annual Reunion of Pegram Battalion Association in the Hall of House of Delegates, Richmond, Virginia, May 21, 1886, Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, (January-December, 1886), p. 11.

85. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, I, p. 159.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM MANASSAS TO FREDERICKSBURG

On April 17, 1861, the day the Virginia Convention passed a secession ordinance, William Pegram "left college and returned to Richmond to join Co. F,<sup>1</sup> which had been ordered to Acquia Creek."

#### 1. ENTERS THE CONFEDERATE SERVICE

He arrived in Richmond on April 18, 1861; reported to Company F, which had been called into service by Governor John Letcher; and wrote his friend Charles Ellis Munford that, "there are about forty vacancies, as the Gov'r has<sup>2</sup> allowed us to take about a hundred and fifty men in the company." Company<sup>3</sup> F was sent to Acquia Creek, and William was elected Sergeant Major.

On May 3, 1861, he wrote his sister Mary from "Camp Mercer" (probably named for General Hugh Mercer of Revolutionary fame), that he had communicated with "...Gov. Letcher... asking him for a lieutenancy in the<sup>4</sup> Virginia Army, but of course have received no reply yet."

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1. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, I, p. 159.

2. William J. Pegram to Charles Ellis Munford, April 18, 1861, from Richmond, Virginia, (MSS in the Munford-Ellis Papers, at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina).

3. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, May 3, 1861, from "Camp Mercer" near Fredericksburg, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

4. Ibid., Box I.

Sergeant Pegram remained with his old Militia Company only ~~for~~ a short time. He was sent as drill-master to Captain Reuben Lindsay Walker's Battery. His ability was immediately perceived, and he was subsequently elected a lieutenant in the battery which bore the name "Purcell." "It was as Commander of this battery", said Gordon McCabe, "that he was destined in great measure to achieve his hard-won fame..." This battery would be with him from the first battle at Manassas, through the Petersburg Siege. Captain Lindsay Walker had not been "...slow to discover what a thorough soldier he possessed in his young subaltern...", and long afterwards said, "...Pegram spared him all trouble, and that commanding a light battery, one of the most troublesome things in the world, became a pleasure with such an executive officer."

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5. William Gordon McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion...", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV (January-December, 1886), p. 11. It is stated in the "Annual Report of the President of the Virginia Historical Society For 1916", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXV (October-December, 1917), pp. xxxi-xxxii, that John Purcell, a local merchant in Richmond, Virginia, upon learning that the State of Virginia lacked guns, horses, uniforms, etc., necessary to equip a light battery newly organized in the early part of April, 1861, in that city, furnished the "whole battery in the most thorough fashion out of his own pocket." The young volunteers in gratitude for "their munificent patron chose, at his suggestion, Lindsay Walker as their Captain..." the Purcell was the first light battery to leave Richmond for 'the front'." In an article "The Fair Grounds" in the Richmond Daily Whig, Richmond, Virginia, May 22, 1861, it seems that this activity occurred where "crowds of ladies and gentlemen repair every afternoon to the 'Camp of Instruction' of the Virginia Volunteers, at the Hermitage Fair Grounds...to view the battalion drills and dress parades...worth going a long distance to see." According to a communication of J. Bankhead Magruder, Col. Va. Vols. from the Artillery Barracks at the Baptist Seminary (then Richmond College) in Richmond to Col. R.S. Garnett, Adj-Gen., Va. Army, dated April 29, 1861, (Official Records, Series I, Vol. II, Part I, p. 789.), a request that the battery of rifled cannon (parrotts) in charge of Captain Walker and some forty men "not mustered into service, and now at Fredericksburg, Va. be ordered to the artillery barracks...", where they would bring the command up to proper strength, and "be received into the artillery service and drilled, so as to be ready for service with any battery that may be prepared for it." This request was approved by Major General Joseph E. Johnston on April 30, 1861, and Old Richmond College seems to be the most logical place where Pegram



This youth of nineteen, known affectionately as "Willie" bespectacled<sup>6</sup> and small of stature,<sup>7</sup> thus began a period of military service which would prove him "...to be one of those rare men who expand in battle. He finds his sport in battle. Combat is to him what strong drink would have been to many a similar retiring nature."<sup>8</sup> "For four years it was his fortune to bear no small part in all the great actions of the Army of Northern Virginia", Gordon McCabe said of him some years after the war, "...More than once, in desperate action and critical events, were grave trusts confided to his prudence, skill and courage. Thus, to speak soberly, " "the history of that career is the history of the Army to which he belonged."<sup>9</sup>

## II. FIRST MANASSAS CAMPAIGN (July 16-22, 1861)

Lieutenant Pegram's initial battle was the first major conflict of the Army of Northern Virginia, the First Battle of Manassas, July 21, 1861.

The Purcell Battery was not heavily engaged in this struggle; however, it did well when called upon to follow-up with rapid pursuit the fleeing Union Army.<sup>10</sup>

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drilled Walker's gunners in infantry tactics. In a communication of Col Daniel Ruggles to Col. R.S. Garnett, From Fredericksburg, Virginia, May 22, 1861 (Official Records, Series I, Vol II, Part I, p.867.), a similar plea to that of Col. J. Bankhead Magruder had been made to put the Walker's Purcell Battery "in readiness for the field...the only field battery...", in the Fredericksburg Department.

6. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, I, p.159.

7. Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, I, p.649.

8. Ibid., III, p.xliv.

9. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, I, p.159.

10. War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 Vols.; Washington, D.C., 1885-1905), Series I, Vol. II, Part I, pp.476, 491. Government Printing Office

General Joseph E. Johnston, in his battle report, gave credit to the Purcell men by saying, "Schenck's brigade made a light demonstration towards Lewis' Ford which was quickly checked by Holme's brigade, which had just arrived from the right. His artillery, under Captain Walker, was used with great skill." <sup>11</sup>

### III. ACTION AT MARLBOROUGH POINT (August 23, 1861)

After the Manassas Campaign, both the Confederate and Union Armies utilized the remaining months of the year to prepare for the next confrontation. There were few skirmishes and no major battles during this period, and General Joseph E. Johnston considered his main task, that of "preparing our troops for active service by diligent instruction." <sup>12</sup> One of the clashes which eventuated between forces during this interlude involved the Purcell Battery and two Federal steamers on August 23, 1861, at Marlborough Point, which is at the mouth of Potomac Creek. At 4:30 P.M., the Federal steamer "Yankee and a tug were standing in the mouth of Potomac Creek." A section of rifles from the Purcell Battery were ordered to the point. The enemy fired, and the Confederates answered. The U.S. Steamer "Release" engaged them in return.

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11. Ibid, Series I, Vol. II, Part I, pp.476, 491. Official Records Series I, Vol II, Part I, P.499, "Walker's rifled guns of the brigade... came up in time to be fired with precision and decided, execution at the retreating enemy..."; Official Records, Series I, Vol. II, Part I, P.565, "I ordered Walker's rifled guns to fire at the retreating enemy...The fire... was exceedingly accurate, and did much execution..."

12. Ibid., Series I, Vol.V, Par I, p. 167 ff; Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, Directed, During The Late War Between The States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 69.

In the report of Colonel R.M. Cary, Commander of the 30th Virginia Infantry, there is mention of the affair to the effect that "The officers in charge of the pieces and the men behaved with proper coolness and deliberation. They were Lieutenants Hagerty, Pegram, and Dabney." The enemy's fire had been very accurate and frequently a shell would burst in close proximity to the field pieces. Although it is believed that both the Yankee and the Release were hit, the former more than once, this forty minutes of action, during which the Confederates "fired some twenty-five shot and shell; the enemy as many more.", effected no casualties on the Confederate side. Captain R. L. Walker of the Purcell Battery had been in immediate command of all the pieces. These guns were distributed in Braxton's Fredericksburg Battery, Cooke's Stafford Battery, and Walker's Purcell Battery.<sup>13</sup> A similar action had taken place on May 31, 1861, when the enemy attacked the naval battery at Acquia Creek, Captain Walker with his six pounder rifled guns, "having been brought early into the action", was, "represented as having been admirable...",<sup>14</sup> thwarted the attempts of three war steamer and some small transports.

#### IV. PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN (March 2-August 14, 1862)

The Confederate Army, Under General Joseph E. Johnston spent the winter months of 1861-62 at Centerville, Virginia, but on March 7, 1862, he sent an order for the movement of the Army to the south bank of the Rappahannock River.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Official Records, Series I, Vol. V, Part I, p.114

14. Official Records, Series I, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 55-56.

15. Official Records, Series I, Vol. 108, Part I, p. 1087; Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, Directed, During the Late War Between The States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), pp.101-03.

By the evening of the ninth, the troops were on their way. This move had been initiated by Johnston when it was known that Union General George B. McClellan was preparing for a forward movement, either by Fredericksburg or the Peninsula. 16  
17  
The Purcell Battery was stationed near Fredericksburg.

Sometime during the months immediately preceding the Peninsula Campaign, Captain Walker of the Purcell Battery was given a battalion of nine batteries in General A.P. Hill's Division, and was promoted to the rank of Major. Lieutenant Pegram was promoted to Captain of the Purcell and this unit was one of 18 the nine batteries of Walker's battalion. This promotion was an exciting experience for Pegram as evidenced by a letter to his sister Jennie on April 3, 1862. "I have been so busy since my election to the Captaincy that I have not had time to drop a line home...Tell Sister that I have grown six inches since my promotion, and that I have employed two barbers to keep my beard in trim, for fear my friends won't know me." Pegram did not think it would be easy to become accustomed to being called Captain, and at such an instance, "I generally look around to see if Capt. Walker is present." He considered himself "Very fortunate", and felt that he had "a great deal to be thankful for"; nevertheless, "The position is a very responsible one, but I would not exchange places with anybody in the confederacy."

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16. J.E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, p. 102.

17. W.J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, April 3, 1862, near Fredericksburg, Virginia. (Pegram-Johnston-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

18. Armistead Churchill Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, I, p.160; Jennings Cropper Wise, The Long Arm of Lee: The History of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) with a forward by L. Van Loan Naisawald, p. 204.

His battery was now up to full strength with a hundred and fifty "high spirited, respectable, able-bodied men as is found. I have six pieces, and about one hundred horses so you know my hands are full..." "I don't know yet where we will be ordered to..", he continues, but "I don't intend to allow anything, except my duties to God, to interfere with my duty to my country."<sup>19</sup>

General George B. McClellan moved 121,500 men and supplies from Washington to Fort Monroe, where he arrived himself on April 2. He intended on ascending the Peninsula to the Capitol of the Confederacy at Richmond. The York and the James Rivers would protect his flanks in the movement. General Irvin McDowell was to cooperate with McClellan by advancing on Richmond from the north.<sup>20</sup> Captain Pegram and his battery at this time were attached to Brigadier General Charles W. Field's Brigade at Fredericksburg to protect Johnston's rear. McDowell advanced on Fredericksburg in strength on April 17, 1862. Field burned the bridges, evacuated and went into camp on the Telegraph Road, twelve miles below Fredericksburg.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this activity, Pegram missed the Battle of Seven Pines, which was fought May 31-June 1, 1862; however, it is doubtful that his artillery could have added materially to the efforts of the Confederates. General E. Porter Alexander, who later became Chief of Artillery of Longstreet's First Corps, explained the reason for this, when he wrote:

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19. W.J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, April 3, 1862, near Fredericksburg, Virginia (Pegram-Johnston-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

20. Official Records, Series I, Vol XV, Part I, pp.64, 66,67, 68.

21. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part I, pp.433-36.

Perhaps our greatest deficiency at this period was in the artillery service. None of our batteries were combined into battalions, but each infantry brigade had a battery attached to it. There were no field officers, of artillery, charged with combining batteries and massing them to concentrate heavy fire upon important points. There was never greater need or better opportunity for this than in Johnston's battle of the 31st. The enemy had but two batteries, Kirby's and Brady's, and no more were available. They did not receive a single hostile cannon shot, and were able to devote their whole fire to our infantry lines, which in every case seemed to be finally repulsed only by heavy canister at close quarters. We had no lack of batteries. The roads were full of them, but there was no organization to make them effective. Both the roads and open fields were in very miry condition, and all movement would have been slow, but a competent officer by doubling teams could have brought up guns with little delay. <sup>22</sup>

Although Captain William Pegram missed the "Seven Pines" he could not miss the "Seven Days." Lee proposed to drive McClellan's Army from Richmond, and thus began seven days of fighting. Pegram was involved in battles at three places: Mechanicsville, Gaines' Mill and Malvern Hill.

The first major engagement of the Purcell Battery was in Mechanicsville on June 26, 1862. Here the unit held the post of honor, and it paid the bitter price. When General Lee launched his offense at Mechanicsville, Captain Pegram and the Purcell Battery were sent forward with Field's Brigade, the van of A.P. Hill's Division. Pegram's guns were hardly unlimbered on the field, when they came under the converging fire of the Federal batteries across Beaverdam Creek. Although outnumbered by Federal Artillery, Pegram's men accredited themselves well. Captain Pegram managed to match their fire

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22. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs Of A Confederate, p. 90.

for some time, though his men were falling rapidly and one piece after another  
 23 was damaged or fouled. After the battle, it was reported that four of his  
 six guns were disabled before nightfall, that one of his officers had been  
 24 killed, and two seriously wounded, and forty-seven were killed or wounded.  
 Pegram's two remaining guns, fired long after the fighting subsided, and  
 incited one Confederate to say, "Listen to the little gamecock crowing in  
 25 the dark!"

At dawn, June 27, 1862, A.P. Hill and his brigade commanders were  
 mapping out battle plans for the day. "I think we can take it for granted  
 that Pegram's battery was so nearly annihilated as not to be counted in forces  
 available," one of the officers said. However, when Pegram reported, he  
 stated that his battery claimed "as its right the most exposed position on  
 26 the firing line this morning."

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23. The Battle of Seven Pines had two major results. First, General McClellan turned to being more cautious. In the second place, General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded in the conflict, and General Robert E. Lee became commander of the army he named "The Army of Northern Virginia." Previously, Lee had been military advisor to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. The best discussion on the succession of Lee to command and the origin of the name "Army of Northern Virginia" is Douglas Southall Freeman, R.E. Lee, A Biography (4 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934) I, pp. 77-80; Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p. 837; W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion, Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV (January-December, 1886), p. 11.

24. W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag Of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV (January-December, 1886) p. 12; Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p. 837.

25. J.C. Goolsby, "Col William Johnson Pegram," Confederate Veteran, VI (June, 1898), No. 6, p. 270; Ibid: Article "Col. William Johnson Pegram", XVIII (March, 1930), No. 3, p. 113.

26. Article "Col. William Johnson Pegram, "Confederate Veteran XXXVIII, (March 1930), No. 3, p. 125.

Gordon McCabe later wrote "During the night Pegram thoroughly equipped the two guns which had not been disabled. "His request was granted," McCabe testified "and everywhere during the 'Seven Days' that plucky section and its young Captain found a place where the combat raged hottest."<sup>27</sup> The report of General A.P. Hill sums up the part Pegram's men played in the Battle of Gaines' Mill of June 27, 1862. He states that Lee gave him an order to advance his whole line at seven o'clock (A.M.) and to communicate that order as far as he could tell all commanders. The batteries of Crenshaw, Johnson, Braxton, and Pegram were actively engaged in this advance, however, Crenshaw and Johnson "were pretty well knocked to pieces," but "Pegram with indomitable energy and earnestness of purpose, though having lost 47 men and many horses at Mechanicsville, had put his battery in condition for this fight."<sup>28</sup>

Pegram's battery played no substantial part in the fighting at Savage Station on June 29, or at Glendale on June 30; however, it did see action at the Battle of Malvern Hill, July 1, 1862. The story of Pegram at Malvern Hill is described in the report of Brigadier General A.R. Wright, who commanded the Third Brigade in Major General Benjamin Huger's Division and who supported the guns of Pegram's Battery in the attack. He states that Moorman's Battery was ordered forward, but soon was forced to retire under superior fire. Meanwhile, Pegram's battery was ordered into position, taking its post "200 yards to the left of Moorman's; it opened fire upon the superiorly equipped enemy.

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27. W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battallion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p.12.

28. Report of Major General A.P. Hill, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p.837.



When Moorman retired, Pegram's battery was left alone to contend with the whole force of the enemy's artillery," His men manfully continued the unequal contest until their severe losses demanded that only one piece be worked, and "even then, with one single piece, they firmly held their ground and continued to pour a deadly fire upon the enemy's line..." At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, this single gun and its crew were ordered to cease firing until more could be put into action.<sup>29</sup>

Another battery was ordered into position, "and again the gallant Pegram opened with his single gun, himself assisting to work it."

"No men," reported Brigadier General Lewis A. Armistead of the Fourth Brigade, "could have behaved better than Captains Pegram and Grimes; they worked their guns after their men were cut down, and only retired when entirely disabled."<sup>30</sup> The Divisional Commander, Major General A.P. Hill, reported that Pegram's battery "nobly did its work...", as its, "battered condition and many casualties sadly attested, " and Captain Pegram was on Hill's list for "especial mention for conspicuous gallantry..."<sup>31</sup>

After the Seven Days fighting, the casualty list of the Purcell Battery reported that Pegram's unit lost seven killed and fifty-three wounded,<sup>32</sup> a total of sixty out of a battery of eighty men.

29. Report of Brigadier General Ambrose R. Wright, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p.813.

30. Report of Brigadier General Lewis A. Armistead, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, pp.818-19.

31. Report of Major General A.P. Hill, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p. 839.

32. Return of Casualties in the Confederate forces during Seven-Day's Battles, June 25-July 1, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p. 983.

This loss was probably attributable to Pegram's conviction that the most  
 33  
 valuable service can be rendered at close range.

The residents of Richmond were happy that Lee had forced McClellan's withdrawal from the city, they were also pleased with the accomplishments of a native son, Captain William Pegram. An interesting event that took place at this time was recorded by Gordon McCabe. "Richmond....was not unmindful of her youthful hero. The town rang with his praises--praises closest to a soldier's heart--," he said, "From the lips of wounded men who had seen him in the dust and sweat of battle and who spoke of him as only brave men speak of each other." According to McCabe, his name was introduced into a play at the local theatre by one of the actors, and the comment "elicited the most tumultuous applause." The actor "declared that the boy-Captain fought at such close quarters because he was too nearsighted to see a dozen yards, and would never open fire until he saw the enemy." At this remark, McCabe said, "the bronzed veterans in the pit, with bandaged head and arms in slings, rose and cheered lustily." To all of this, Pegram reacted with characteristic modesty, and only rarely rode into Richmond to visit his family, "blushing 34 furiously when anyone spoke to him of the attention his gallantry had excited."

The report of the Seven Days Battles of Brigadier General Charles W. Field expressed the following opinion of Pegram.

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33. Robert Stiles, Four Years Under Marse Robert (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1903), p.110.

34. W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 12.

The conduct of Captain Pegram's battery in these engagements excites my admiration. Always eager, always alert, Captain Pegram was in every action where opportunity offered, and always doing his duty, as the loss of every officer killed or wounded and 60 out of the about 80 men, sadly attests. I trust the merits of this officer will not go unrewarded by the Department.<sup>35</sup>

In evaluating the Seven Days Battles eighty years later, Douglas Southall Freeman wrote: "...where battery commanders had a fair field of fire, some of them shone. First among them in performance had been Capt. William J. Pegram..."<sup>36</sup>

After the unrelenting battles of the Peninsula Campaign, the Purcell Battery was ready for rest. It was, therefore, fortunate that the unit had three weeks of inactivity.<sup>37</sup>

#### V. SECOND MANASSAS CAMPAIGN (August 7-September 2, 1862)

While McClellan was encamped at Harrison's Landing, a new threat to Virginia was forming in the northwestern part of the state. The Union Forces previously under the command of Generals Banks, Fremont, and McDowell were consolidated under the command of Major General John Pope, and he began an advance toward the Rapidan River in the early part of August, 1862.<sup>38</sup> General "Stonewall" Jackson had been ordered to Gordonsville, Virginia to meet any threat from Pope.<sup>39</sup>

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35. Report of Brigadier General Charles W. Field, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, Part II, p.843.

36. Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, I, p.649.

37. W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 12.

38. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p. 176, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part III, pp.435, 436-37, 473-74.

39. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part III, p.915.

Lee wanted to prevent Pope from marching south to join with McClellan near Richmond.<sup>40</sup> Jackson arrived at Gordonsville on July 19, 1862, but feeling his force of 12,000 inadequate, appealed to Lee for help.<sup>41</sup> On July 27, 1862, A. P. Hill's Division was ordered to move ~~(his Division)~~ by rail to reinforce Jackson.<sup>42</sup> Captain William Pegram's Battery was attached to Hill's Division. After joining Jackson's command, Pegram wrote his sister, "We have been so constantly on the march, that I have not had time to write...", "I have made up my mind to the fact that I will hear very irregularly and seldom from home, and this I consider to be the only drawback to being with Jackson. Pegram, however, was pleased to be in the up country. He continued his letter "you can't imagine how much I enjoy the pure air and fine scenery of the mountains. I have eighty-five men present, and not one on the sick list." The young Captain, knowing the demands of his daily life, was not sure that he could keep up his usual flow of letters to his loved ones at home. "I will take every opportunity to write home," he promises, but "I don't know exactly how to direct you about directing them to me, Genl. Field's Brigade, Genl. Hill's Division, Genl. Jackson's Army. That is pretty awkward, but I expect it is about the best plan."<sup>43</sup>

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40. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p.179.

41. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.191: E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p.180.

42. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part III, p.919.

43. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, August 8, 1862, from Orange Court House, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

On August 9, 1862, at Cedar Mountain, seven miles south of Culpeper,  
<sup>44</sup>  
 Jackson engaged the Second Federal Corps. While the attack was on and these  
 divisions were hard-pressed, A.P. Hill's Division arrived just in time to  
 check the utter confusion. Lt. Col. Lindsay Walker, commanding the artillery  
 battalion of Hill's Division, was unable to put more than the two batteries  
 of Pegram and Fleet into position, since "the road was so blocked up with  
 wagons and ambulances as to prevent any more artillery from reaching the  
 front."  
<sup>45</sup>  
 Pegram and Fleet, led by Colonel Walker, dashed out into an open  
 field on the left of General Early's Brigade to within 150 yards of the  
 concealed skirmishers of the enemy. There they unlimbered the guns for action,  
 without the support of the infantry. The Federals saw this and made an attempt  
 to capture these pieces, but General Jubal Early's Brigade advanced at  
<sup>46</sup>  
 double quick to check their threat. In the meantime, "Pegram ordered  
 double charges of canister, and seizing the flag, he went from gun to gun,  
 waving it in the very faces of the men", and he begged them, "Don't let the  
 enemy have these guns or this flag; Jackson is looking at you. Go in men;  
<sup>47</sup>  
 give it to them." Pegram held his position, which was the most advanced  
 one, "...for at least half an hour, and after the infantry, with the excep-  
 tion of the Thirteenth Virginia Regiment, had fallen back..."

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44. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p.180-181;  
Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.184.

45. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p.182;  
Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.226.

46. D.S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, p.35.

47. A.S. Drewry, "Private in Purcell Battery, Pegram's Battalion  
 Artillery, Third Corps, Army of Northern Virginia." Southern Historical  
 Society Papers, Vol. XXVII, P.90.

The battery was then ordered to retire, and the loss in men and horses was considerable.<sup>48</sup> Stonewall Jackson was determined to drive the enemy back to Culpeper, if possible, and at 10 o'clock that night he directed Captain Pegram's Battery to go forward, with a brigade of infantry in support, and feel out the front. Pegram obediently proceeded to a little knoll and opened fire. Three Federal batteries answered his with exceptional fire power. He<sup>49</sup> held his ground for an hour or more and then withdrew.

On August 14, 1862, Captain Pegram wrote his own report of the battle in the form of a letter to his sister Jennie. "I again got in a very hot place", he said, "and was unfortunate enough to lose Lieut. Featherston and two men killed and twelve wounded." According to Pegram, Jackson attacked the enemy without waiting for his stragglers to come up and they captured, "... a Brig. Genl. (Prince), two Cols, and a large number of other officers and men, and fifteen hundred prisoners." Pegram reveals his strong belief in Divine providence in this letter "...an ever merciful God again took me under His protection, and brought me safely through the fight. I received four bullet holes through the skirt of my coat." He related that a sharpshooter had taken "deliberate aim at me eight or ten times, and missed me." He expressed frustration in his inadequacy "to show gratitude..to such Divine mercy." Then Pegram scoffs the efficacy of "...Yankee bullets and shells, as long as I am under His protection." "Ask Mother to cheer up", he said thoughtfully, "and remember that we are all under His protection." With all of the danger realized by William Pegram, he enjoyed the spectacle of the

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48. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.226.

49. Ibid, pp.187,216,218,219,226.

old type of martial pagentry. During the afternoon of August 9, 1862, he wrote that, "my battery was on the field playing on the infantry, and I had a good opportunity of seeing all the infantry movements on both sides. It was certainly a fine sight." The fighting that eventuated during the night was "the hottest for me", Pegram stated. He believed that it was almost 12 o'clock before the conflict subsided, and "if they had brought another battery by me, we could have whipped them..." In an exultant mood, he wrote that, "Longstreet's division has come up, and it is said that General Lee is certainly coming up. Hurrah! On to Philadelphia! I'll get you shoes &." 50

The story of Captain Pegram at Cedar Mountain would not be complete without the praise of his superiors. "Captain Pegram...inflicted great loss on the enemy on Saturday evening", reported Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay Walker, and his conduct, with that of his men, "...cannot be too highly commended." General Stonewall Jackson said that Pegram's "well-directed and unexpected fire produced much disorder and confusion." "I have taken occasion before to speak of the distinguished services of Pegram's battery," said Brigadier General Charles W. Field in his report, "it is sufficient to say now that it fully sustained the reputation made on other fields." 51

In his letter of August 14, 1862, Pegram had told his sister Jennie that, "Genl. Field sent me an abstract from his official report which I intend sending you, but lost it. He was very complimentary and asked for my promotion which I do want." One of Genl. Hill's staff told Willie that the division commander (General A.P. Hill) had also recommended his promotion. 52 This promotion would not come until April, 1863.

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50. W.J. Pegram to his sister, Jennie, August 14, 1862, from Camp near Gordonsville, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

51. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.226., Ibid., pp. 184, 218.

52. W.J. Pegram to his sister, Jennie August 14, 1862, from Camp near Gordonsville, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

After the Battle of Cedar Mountain, Lee thought it unlikely that Pope, who had claimed victory, would turn his back and run. Meanwhile, General Jeb Stuart, had the good fortune to come into possession of General Pope's order book, which revealed enough to convince Lee that his campaign would be a failure, if he did not soon bring Pope to battle. Lee had an Army of about 55,000, Pope would soon command 130,000. By August 13, 1862, Lee was assured that McClellan was leaving the Peninsula, and he would no longer constitute a threat from that sector. The Confederate leader decided immediate action, and while he with Longstreet, and 30,000 held the line of the Rappahannock and occupied Pope's attention, Stonewall Jackson with 22,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry began a roundabout march of over 50 miles to surprise the enemy's depot of supplies at Manassas Junction, 24 miles in Pope's rear. 53

Captain Pegram's Purcell Battery marched with Jackson. Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, in his biography of Stonewall Jackson, called this, "The most famous of his marches..." He said, "It is only certain that we have record of few enterprises of greater daring...It is easy to conceive. It is less easy to execute, but to risk cause and country, name and reputation, on a single throw, and to abide the issue with unflinching heart, is the supreme exhibition of the soldier's fortitude." 54

Pegram wrote to his mother about this type of forced marching with Jackson. He said, "We frequently march eighteen out of twenty-four hours."

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53. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, pp.185-91.

54. G.F.R. Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War (London, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936), p.432.



From August 8 to August 24, 1862, Jackson's column was either marching or fighting everyday, and sometimes both. On August 24, Pegram's guns were in an all day duel on the Rappahannock with much exposure to enemy fire. There was only one fatal casualty in the Purcell Battery. At night, Jackson's troops were recalled, but no rest period ensued. "We withdrew to Jefferson-<sup>55</sup>ville and made preparations for the march," Pegram said.

Captain Pegram, in the same letter to his mother, gave a good description of his part in the struggle for Manassas Junction and the booty captured there. On August 25, 1862, according to Pegram, the Army "Marched rapidly until midnight, making a flank movement and crossing the Rappahannock above Warrenton, completely fooling the enemy and getting to their rear." At dawn on August 26, the column was again set in motion and the troops "marched all day until late in the night." Pegram states further that they "made a dash upon Manassas, whipping and capturing greater portion of Taylor's New Jersey Brigade...and two trains of supplies for Pope's Army valued at the several millions of dollars, consisting of everything that the human mind can imagine." It was unfortunate, according to Pegram, that the enemy pressed upon them with heavy force, and Jackson was forced to burn what could not be carried off. Before this, the troops were allowed to help themselves to whatever they wished. Pegram was fortunate to get, "a first rate Yankee bridle and sabre, carbine, enough sugar and coffee to last me for six months, a small tent fly which accommodates two or three persons and can be carried behind the saddle with the blankets..." He also obtained a dozen cakes of soap which

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55. William J. Pegram to his mother (Mrs. Virginia Johnson Pegram), September 7, 1862, from Bivouac three miles below Frederick City, Maryland (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

From August 8 to August 24, 1862, Jackson's column was either marching or fighting everyday, and sometimes both. On August 24, Pegram's guns were in an all day duel on the Rappahannock with much exposure to enemy fire. There was only one fatal casualty in the Purcell Battery. At night, Jackson's troops were recalled, but no rest period ensued. "We withdrew to Jefferson-<sup>55</sup>ville and made preparations for the march," Pegram said.

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55. William J. Pegram to his mother (Mrs. Virginia Johnson Pegram), September 7, 1862, from Bivouac three miles below Frederick City, Maryland (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

he soon lost; however, he is sure that he will be able to get more then when the army arrived in Baltimore. The troops, according to Pegram's account, found enough food for several days, "...without which we should have starved." The Federals finally advanced in force, and Jackson placed his men in line of battle, to await their attack. "Seeing this, they held off," Pegram said,<sup>56</sup> "and after firing the train we retired in the night to Centreville."

Concerning the Battle of Second Manassas, August 28, 1862, he continued, "Our situation this and the next two days may be said to have been one of extreme hazard, and nothing but the most obstinate courage of our troops could have saved us. God Assisted us and we drove them back with great slaughter. I lost three men severely wounded." The next day at Second Manassas, August 29, apparently was no different from the 28th, as Pegram stated in his letter, "It was a repetition of the preceding day. The only change being that the fight was more severe, commercial and lasted all day." With twelve pieces of artillery during the hottest part of the fight, he engaged an entire Federal battery, until a shell burst in the midst of a gun crew. "It was the worst shot I ever saw...killing two of my best men, wounding two, stunning the remainder, killing three horses, disabling a wheel and cutting through a tree." 11 P.M. Longstreet arrived on the field. Now Lee had about 50,000 troops. Pegram thought the Federalst had double that number. Lee performed with daring here. Dividing his forces and rejoining them on the battlefield of his choice is a military feat indeed. The Confederates attacked on August 30, 1862. Pegram stated, "We drove them two miles back, completely routing them, capturing six thousand prisoners<sup>57</sup>, and any number of caissons, small arms, etc."

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56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

In reporting the action in which Pegram was engaged on August 24, General A.P. Hill stated that, "...Pegram poured in such a storm of shot that the enemy were scattered in the greatest confusion. Twice was this repeated. My own loss was 18; that of the enemy must have been heavy in comparison." According to General Hill the action of August 30, was referred to in his report when he said: "The batteries of Braxton, Pegram, McIntosh and Crenshaw  
58 were gallantly served during this fight and did yeoman service."

#### VI. MARYLAND CAMPAIGN (September 3-17, 1862)

After the defeat at Second Manassas, Pope retired to fortified positions around Alexandria. The enemy having taken refuge within lines impregnable to assault, Lee had no alternative but to take the offense elsewhere. He could  
59 not afford to sit before Washington and await the enemy's pleasure. On September 3, 1862, General Lee wrote to President Jefferson Davis that, "The present seems to be the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the Confederate Army to enter Maryland....The purpose if discovered, will have the effect of carrying the enemy north of the Potomac, and if pre-  
60 vented, will not result in much evil."

Soon thereafter, Lee put his veterans in the road towards Maryland. Captain William Pegram made notes in the various impressions he had during this movement in a letter to his mother, and wrote that:

It was a grand...spectacle...There was the river several hundred yards in width, the mountain scenery around, the troops up to their waist in water, the setting sun and the bands playing "Dixie" and "My Maryland." But there was one thing wanted to complete the scene---that was a crowd on the opposite bank welcoming them as their deliverers. It seems a pity that we could not have crossed at some other point. You could see disappointment written on the face of every man, on none more

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58. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XII, Part II, p.670; Ibid., p.672.

59. E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p.220.

60. Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, Editors, The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown Company, 1961), pp.292-93.

more than the Marylanders who were in our army...Here we are lounging about, enjoying the respite allowed us from our truly hard labours preparatory to, as we suppose, another week of fatigue and danger...We have hit upon two Union Counties. The Virginia side of the Potomac was even much tainted. The reception in Leesburg might have been much warmer than it was. 61

The Southern sympathizers, according to Pegram, were restrained for they did not know how soon they might again be inside Federal lines, and the Union men were spies upon them. "It will take a good victory to bring them to our tanks", he reasoned. 62

To secure his supply lines and protect his rear, Lee sent Stonewall Jackson to engage Federal forces at Harper's Ferry. On September 10, 1862, Jackson began his march and Captain Pegram with his battery took their place in the column. Before noon, on September 13, the head of the column was in sight of Bolivar Heights. At daybreak the next day, Pegram's battery opened fire and rapid enfilade at a one thousand yard range. Federal batteries answered but an hour later surrendered. The Confederates took 11,000 prisoners, 12,000 stands of arms, seventy pieces of artillery, and a large number of horses and equipment, many wagons, great quantity of commissary, quartermasters, and ordnance stores. 63

Following the surrender, Jackson advanced to Sharpsburg. Several days later Hill's division was also ordered from Harpers Ferry to Sharpsburg after leaving a brigade to complete removal of the captured property, and was in motion at 7:30 A.M. Hill arrived the afternoon of September 17, and his batteries were ordered into position. Pegram and Crenshaw were directed to a hill on the right where they were rewarded with a wide field of fire. Hill said, "My troops

61. W.J. Pegram to his mother, September 7, 1862, from Bivouac three miles below Frederick City, Maryland (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

62. Ibid.

63. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XIX, Part I, 980-81.

were not in a moment too soon." At 4:30 P.M., one of Pegram's guns, together with Captain Braxton's, was moved to the extreme right, where they began an enfilading fire. "From this point, they (the guns) were worked, with beautiful precision and great effect upon the infantry of the enemy until nightfall closed the engagement." Lindsay Walker reported that Pegram's men were exhausted when they were withdrawn. Hill's arrival with the artillery saved Lee at Sharpsburg. Outnumbered by McClellan, they fought off five separate attacks. Hill, in his report stated that, "My gallant Captain Pegram, of the artillery, was also wounded for the first time." A small fragment had struck Pegram's head, but only a surface wound was suffered.<sup>64</sup> "He flatly refused, however, to avail himself of leave of absence," wrote Gordon McCabe, "and within a fortnight was on duty with his battery....." After recrossing the Rtomac, Pegram's Purcell Battery went into camp at Camp Bunker Hill, which is twelve miles north of Winchester.<sup>65</sup>

At this juncture in Captain Pegram's military career, he was evidently so seasoned to the excitement of battle that inactive camp life bored him. "Since my last letter home, we have been lying quiet in camp. After an active campaign this seems very stupid and dull to a soldier." The troops had not been completely idle, according to Pegram. "General Lee is getting rid of all incompetent officers and cowards, by a simple order relieving them from duty, without any court." The result of this stern action, in Pegram's words, was: "that the whole army is much better state of discipline than heretofore, and should we have any more fighting shortly, there will not be the same amount of straggling and cowardice that usually attends a large army."<sup>66</sup>

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64. Ibid, pp. 955, 980-84.

65. W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p.13.

66. W.J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, October 7, 1862, from Camp Bunker Hill, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box I.

During the encampment at Bunker Hill, Captains Pegram and Crenshaw were put under arrest. Their men had been using the wood from fencing in the community to fuel their camp fires. The charge was dropped later; however, Pegram would have preferred a just court to handle the matter. He related the misunderstanding to his sister Jennie in a letter dated October 24, 1862. "We did not wish to accept a release, but upon inquiry found that we had no option...and then not even allowed the privilege of a court." After seeing General Gregg of South Carolina, who had practiced law before the war, Pegram and Crenshaw were assured that there was misunderstanding on both sides, and this was proven to be so when Gregg went to see A.P. Hill on the matter. "Genl. Hill expressed his regret that the affair occurred, and expressed the kindest feeling towards us all. Thus ended the matter....In Ewell's Division there was one brigade in which every colonel is under arrest for some offense--  
 67  
 their men's burning rails."

Captain Pegram evidently used this period of rest to put his battery into condition, for he said, "My battery is in as good, if not better order, than ever," in the same letter written to his sister Jennie, dated October 24, 1862. He continued, with apparent pride, "I have two Parrots & two Napoleons, with plenty of men, & the probability of getting out six pieces.  
 68  
 If you know anything about guns, you will pronounce this a pretty battery."

The Army, during its encampment, was put on some rather rigorous details, as Pegram gives testimony in his letter to Jennie. He said, "Since I wrote Lezzie the other day, we have been down to the front, with the whole division, and torn up the railroad altogether some twenty or twenty-five miles."

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67. W.J. Pegram to his sister, Jennie, October 24, 1862, from Camp Bunker Hill (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

68. Ibid.

We returned to this camp yesterday." To Pegram, this was the signal for the breaking up of the fall campaign, and he expected an order to fall back "to some convenient point for the establishment of our lines - probably to Manassas on the Rappahannock." "Of course, all this is mere surmise," Pegram said, then with confidence, "We all content ourselves with the reflection that Genl. Lee knows <sup>what</sup> he is about & consequently regard all things as for the best." 69

VII. FREDERICKSBURG CAMPAIGN  
(November 9-December 15, 1862)

It is evident from the letter written to Jennie from Camp Bunker Hill that Pegram was preparing for the army to enter winter quarters. This was not to be for on November 29, 1862, he wrote from Orange Court House, "We marched to this point this afternoon & resume the march in the morning. I don't know exactly for what point." The Army's destination was Fredericksburg to head off the Union Army, now under the command of General Ambrose E. Burnside, who hoped to bypass Lee and proceed to Richmond. The letter Pegram wrote to Jennie from Orange Court House lends the writer an opportune time to point up a distinguishing characteristic of Captain Pegram. Only a casual glance at a photograph of this young warrior reveals that he was very nearsighted. He expressed concern for his eyes when he wrote to his sister: "I received the spectacles you kindly send me...It is needless for me to express my thanks for your thoughtfulness. Tell Mr. Tyler his numbers have changed. Those glasses you sent me are too weak, and I send them back...with a glass the desired strength. Please exchange them for that kind of glass, and excuse my putting you to so much trouble." 70

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69. Ibid.

70. William J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, November 29, 1862, from Camp near Orange Court House, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers) Box I.



"Very nearsighted," wrote Jennings C. Wise, "Pegram frequently made personal reconnaissances almost up to the enemy's position, a custom which often elicited complaint from those who were called upon to accompany him." "So well known had he become among all arms before the War had progressed very far, that the men in the trenches or on the march were often heard to exclaim: 'There's going to be a fight, for here comes that damn little man with the Specs'." <sup>71</sup> For all of this, it is no wonder that in addition to the nickname <sup>72</sup> "Willie", he bore the appropriate title "Little Specs."

General Burnside attacked across the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg on December 11, 1862, and in a three-day-battle, tried unsuccessfully to dislodge Lee's Army. Lt. Col. R.L. Walker was in charge of fourteen guns on <sup>73</sup> the right and Pegram's Purcell Battery was among them.

The casualties, at Fredericksburg, were high. The Confederates suffered 5,300 casualties, with 2,122 of them being from Hill's Division. Walker's Battalion, of which Pegram's Battery was a part, reported eleven killed and <sup>74</sup> eighty-eight wounded. A.P. Hill's report of the battle states, "Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, assisted by Lieutenant (John H.) Chamberlayne, directed the fire from his guns with admirable coolness and precision.

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71. J.C. Wise, "The Boy Gunners of Lee", Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII, P.156.

72. Confederate Records, (MSS in the Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia), Vol. I, p.36.

73. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXI, Part I, pp.636, 645-50.

74. Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), p.96.

Pegram, as usual, with McIntosh to help him, managed to find the hottest place..."<sup>75</sup>

Following the Battle of Fredericksburg, the opposing armies encamped for the winter. Lee's quarters were on the right bank of the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg, Virginia. The Federals were on the left bank, opposite him. The winter months of 1862-63, involved many hardships, for the soldiers of both armies. There was much snow, sleet, and ice during this period. There was much sickness in camp. Some batteries had as many as 20 men on the sick list, and few had less than eight. Pegram's Battery with three officers and 108 men had one officer on leave, one man on detached duty, and three absent without leave. In all, 55 men were absent due to sickness. Poor clothing perhaps  
76  
contributed to much of the sickness.

To Captain Pegram, camp life in winter quarter was a real bore. He always found it dull when the caissons were not rolling, as is evident in a letter to his sister, Jennie, dated January 8, 1863, "As usual, everything is quiet, and dull in this region, and there is nothing of special interest to give you." He had hoped for a furlough; however, pressing duties would not permit it. "It is the opinion of the General Commanding, that active operations may be resumed at any time, and therefore no furloughs will be granted at present", "This is a great disappointment to me, dear Jennie, for I had hoped to see you all, whom I long to see, very shortly", however, "...I very cheerfully submit to this, for I now that General Lee has the interest of the service at heart, & will do whatever is right."

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75. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXI, Part I, p.648.

76. Ibid, Series I, Vol. XXV, Part II, pp.364,638.

There was a slight chance of Pegram going home because "They frequently have to send officers to Richmond on special business connected with the artillery, and I will endeavor to get down in this way during the winter." 77

On January 8, 1863 The Richmond Enquirer featured an article which claimed that France was going to recognize the Confederacy. Pegram read the paper, but disagreed with the logic of it. "I have always been of opinion that we would be better off in the end, to fight the battles out ourselves...The result of our victories has just begun to be shewn at the North, the past month... If they (France) would not help us...twelve months ago, we do not want them to come in now, and get the credit and benefit of our hard struggles." Pegram did not trust Louis Napoleon, and he did not believe intervention would eventuate unless he was benefited and France likewise more than the Confederacy. "If this war is brought suddenly and forcibly to an end, it is much more likely to be renewed, with redoubled force, within a few years," he reasons. 78

In matters pertaining to Christian faith, William Pegram was as exemplary as in the duties of the military office which he bore with distinction. He was missionary in his attitude towards the things of Christ, and the virtues of the Nazarene were his ideal. Gordon McCabe describes the religious concern and devotion of Pegram in the following description of his activities during the winter of 1862-63: "One of his first cares on going into winter quarters...was to assemble the men and say a few words to them concerning the importance of building a chapel and holding regular prayer-meetings." McCabe reported that Pegram attended all worship services in camp "with earnest pleasure", and it was not an uncommon sight to see him sitting among his men in the rude log-chapel, bowing his young

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77. W.J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, January 8, 1863, from Camp near Port Royall, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers.) Box 1.

78. Ibid.; Richmond Enquirer, January 8, 1863.

head reverently in prayer, or singing from the same hymnbook with some weather-<sup>79</sup>  
 beaten private, from whom he had ever exacted strictest military obedience..."  
 As a fellow officer in the artillery, Robert Stiles saw similarities in Pegram  
 and Stonewall Jackson in that both embodied "the strongest Christian faith and  
 deepest spirituality with the most intense spirit of fight."<sup>80</sup>

The Army of Northern Virginia had been fighting as a unit long enough  
 by the winter of 1862-63, for the officers of the various commands to know  
 that the artillery needed a new structure of organization. Brigadier General  
 William Nelson Pendleton, in collaboration with Colonels E. Porter Alexander  
 and Stapleton Crutchfield, prepared and on February 11, 1863, presented to  
 General Lee, a new organizational scheme. In essence, it suggested the substi-  
 tution of corps battalions for brigade batteries. The objections to the  
 usual brigade batteries and division groups was explained by Pendleton. Since  
 the brigade and division commanders were burdened enough with normal duties,  
 it was difficult for them to extend to the artillery assigned to their commands  
 the minute supervision which it demanded. This arrangement also afforded in-  
 sufficient scope for field officers of artillery. Batteries assigned in this  
 permanent fashion, could scarcely be assigned elsewhere, regardless of the  
 nature of an emergency, without producing some friction in the execution of  
 command. "But, most injuriously of all", in Pendleton's words, "this system  
 hinders unity and concentration in battle."<sup>81</sup>

In a plan to remedy these evils, Pendleton proposed that in each corps  
 the artillery be so arranged as to consist of battalions, with each consisting  
 of four batteries.

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80. Robert Stiles, Four Years Under Marse Robert. p.109.

81. Official Records, Series, I, Vol. XXV, Part II, p.614.

Each battalion would be attached to a division in the corps, and it would report to and receive orders from its commander. Each battalion would have two field officers, a surgeon, an ordinance officer, and a bonded officer for supplies, if not both a quartermaster and commissary. The batteries composing each battalion, "should be rendered homogeneous in armament as soon as practicable by interchange of guns with other batteries." All the batteries in each corps would be supervised by and report to the Chief of Artillery for the corps, and the total batteries in both corps would "...be superintended by and report to the general Chief of Artillery, as representing for this arm the General commanding." As a convenience, an alphabetical designation was suggested for the battalion, the initials of the divisional commander was adopted, instead of the usual letter order, lest it appear that one battalion was assigned over another.

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In this new arrangement, both Lt. Col. Lindsay Walker and Captain William J. Pegram were in order for promotions. They would be attached to the Second Corps under the command of Stonewall Jackson. General Pendleton's report, we read:

Battalion L: Lieut.-Col. R.L. Walker, of Virginia, so justly distinguished for long and gallant service, has been recommended for the full rank of Colonel. He might justly receive it and had command of this battalion.

Capt. W.J. Pegram, now commanding a battery in Gen. A.P. Hill's Division, has been recommended for promotion. He has also fully earned it by sufficient service, and would not doubt be highly approved by Lieut.-Col. Walker and by Gen. Hill as the Second Field Officer in this battalion. He is from Virginia. 83

The proposals of Pendleton contemplated that "in the Second Corps 27 batteries with 116 guns, organized into six battalions as in the First Corps. The General Reserve was to consist of two battalions of three batteries each, with a total of 36 pieces."

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82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

Colonel Reuben Lindsay Walker, therefore, would command a battalion which bore his name, in the Division of A.P. Hill, and William Johnson Pegram<sup>85</sup> would be second in command, with the rank of major. The battalion would be structured as follows:

WALKER'S BATTALION

Col. Reuben Lindsay Walker  
Maj. William J. Pegram

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Pee Dee (S.C.) Battery    | Capt. E.B. Brunson             |
| 2. Richmond Crenshaw Battery | Capt. Wm. G. Crenshaw          |
| 3. Richmond Letcher Battery  | Capt. Greenlee Davidson        |
| 4. Richmond Purcell Battery  | Capt. Jos. McGraw              |
| 5. Fredericksburg Battery    | Capt. E.A. Marye <sup>86</sup> |

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86. Official Records, Series I., Vol. XXV, Part II, p.614.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM CHANCELLORSVILLE TO FIVE FORKS

By Spring, 1863, the Union Army had changed commanders. General Ambrose E. Burnside was replaced by General Joseph Hooker as Commander of the Army of the Potomac.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN (April 27-May 6, 1863)

General Hooker devised a plan of crossing the fords of the Rappahannock above Fredericksburg, in the Vicinity of Chancellorsville. This was to be accomplished with five corps, while two corps under Major General John Sedgwick crossed below Fredericksburg.<sup>2</sup> Hooker was convinced he could defeat Lee. Prior to a major engagement, "Jeb" Stuart's artillery Major, John Pelham, was killed. His death, some have said, left the Army of Northern Virginia with only one of his stature, William Pegram.<sup>3</sup>

Lee and Jackson planned how they would fight Hooker and his army of 130,000 men. With General Longstreet and two divisions at Suffolk, Lee would have to face his enemy with only 55,000 troops. It was decided that Lee should hold the main line with 13,000 men composing the divisions of Anderson and McLaws while Jackson proceeded around to the rear of Hooker's right flank. His would be a surprise movement with 28,000 infantry and 112 pieces of artillery.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXI, Part I, p. 755.

2. E. P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, pp. 320-24.

3. D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, pp. 457-46. John Haskell, The Haskell Memoirs, edited by Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingwood (New York: Putman, 1960), pp. 81-83.

4. D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, pp. 543-45; D. S. Freeman, R. E. Lee, II, p. 521.

Early the 2nd of May, 1863, Jackson moved out to Hooker's flank.<sup>5</sup> At 6:30 a.m. on this day, Major Pegram was ordered to demonstrate against the enemy on a road that led from the Confederate right to Chancellorsville. Shortly after his guns were posted, two Federal batteries contested. "I kept some of the guns actively shelling the woods, whilst the others engaged the enemy's batteries," he said in his report. After some time, sensing that the long range did not justify the expenditure of more ammunition, Pegram withdrew his pieces. That afternoon Major Pegram took command of the Battalion, since Colonel Walker had taken command of all of the guns of the Second Corps when Stapleton Crutchfield was wounded. Later in the day, Pegram sent four guns forward in support of the Brigades of McGowan and Pender. These two sections wrought severe damage on the Federal Infantry, during Jackson's attack on Hooker's right.<sup>6</sup>

Sometime after 7 a.m. on May 3rd, Major Pegram, without hesitating, ordered three of his batteries and one of Captain R. C. M. Page's to an eminence known as Hazel Grove, which had been evacuated by the enemy. This position was the key to the field, and Pegram's men accredited themselves well against the Federal batteries at Fairview. In this oblique fire, Pegram reported that his guns did much damage, by exploding some ammunition chests, killing a number of men and horses, and driving the artilleryists from their guns. As the Union infantry advanced, "a

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5. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXV, Part II, p. 940.

6. Ibid., p. 937



murderous fire was kept upon the<sup>6</sup>, killing and wounding a very large number until our infantry came upon their flanks, and we drove them entirely off from this position," reported Pegram.<sup>7</sup> "At Hazel Grove, in short," wrote Douglas S. Freeman, "the finest artillerists of the Army of Northern Virginia were having their greatest day."<sup>8</sup> These men had improved guns,<sup>9</sup> better ammunition,<sup>10</sup> and superior organization.<sup>11</sup>

At one point in this action, Major Pegram went to Colonel E. Porter Alexander and said, "A glorious day, Colonel, a glorious day, Colonel."<sup>12</sup> This is the kind of thing that probably prompted General Harry Heth to write, "Pegram was one of the few men who, I believe, was supremely happy when in battle. He was in his element."<sup>13</sup>

After the Federals evacuated "Fairview", Pegram occupied the position with one of his own batteries and the battalions of Colonels Thomas H. Carter and David G. McIntosh. They opened fire on the Chancellor house, and General Hooker, who had taken up headquarters there, was hit with a piece of falling plaster. Pegram said in his report, "After a heavy cannonading of an hour, during which

7. Ibid., pp. 823, 925, 937-39.

8. D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, p. 592.

9. C. G. Chamberlayne (Comp.), Ham Chamberlayne-Virginian, Letters and Papers of an Artillery Officer in the War for Southern Independence, 1861-1865 (Richmond, Va.: Press of the Dietz Printing Co., Publishers, 1932), p. 176.

10. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXV, Part II, p. 795.

11. Ibid., Part I, pp. 866-70.

12. Confederate Veteran, V (June, 1897), No. 6, p. 288.

13. Harry Heth Typescript of Memoirs, 1825-1899 (MS in the Alderman Library, Manuscript Division, University of Virginia, No. 5071), Chapter XXI, p. 166.

time we inflicted a heavy loss on the enemy, suffering but slightly ourselves, we succeeded in driving them entirely off the field. They left several guns and caissons on the field." Walker at this point took over the battalion again but became ill; therefore, the command devolved on Pegram for the second time.<sup>14</sup>

In the action of May 4th, the Federal artillerists opened eighteen guns on Pegram's battalion and he silenced them all. After the battle, it was estimated that the battalion had lost thirty-three men, killed and wounded;<sup>15</sup> however, Pegram reported that, "Throughout this series of engagements, both officers and men have acted with great gallantry. The firing was the best I have ever seen."<sup>16</sup>

Again, Pegram's commanding officers spoke of him in their reports. General Lee said that the officers and men of the artillery were "deserving especial commendation."<sup>17</sup> General A.P. Hill, Pegram's division commander wrote that, "much is due the artillery."<sup>18</sup> Colonel E. Porter Alexander placed the name of Pegram in his report as being one to whom he was obligated for the young major's "earnest and efficient cooperation."<sup>19</sup>

Pegram's subordinates had words of commendation for him as well. John Hampden Chamberlayne wrote his mother on May 9, 1863, that, "Willy Pegram distinguished himself greatly..." He also said of the new organization of artillery:

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14. Official records, Series I, Vol. XXV, Part I, p. 938.

15. Ibid., pp. 938-39.

16. Ibid., p. 939.

17. Ibid., p. 804.

18. Ibid., p. 824,

19. Ibid., p. 886; E. P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p. 348.

"The most noteworthy feature of the Battle was the efficiency of our Artillery; owing to the issue of good guns replacing bad and the organization into Battalions we massed it and produced effects unknown before."<sup>20</sup> In another letter, Lieutenant John Mumford wrote to his cousin Sallie Mumford the following:

I expect by this time you have heard all about the last battle. Well as usual we had our share of it, and were complimented by Maj. Pegram. He said he never saw men behave better or guns handled with such effect. This was the first battle Major Pegram commanded us in, he was everywhere on the field, encouraging and cheering the men to their duty, he is the bravest and noblest fellow I ever saw, has won the confidence and esteem of the whole command...Present my compliments to Mrs. Pegram when you see her and tell her Willie is the adoration of this Batt and of all who know him and if he had his deserts he would have three stars on his collar instead of one.<sup>21</sup>

Major Pegram remembered the Battle of Chancellorsville as being a supreme experience in his military career. Sometime later, a group of his comrades were discussing the happiest moments in their lives. One of them asked Pegram, "Well, Colonel, what day do you reckon your happiest?" Pegram replied: "Oh, the day I had sixty guns under me at Chancellorsville, galloping down the turnpike after Hooker and his people."<sup>22</sup> This apparent delight was not without sorrow. The victory of Chancellorsville was attended with the death of Stonewall Jackson, who had been Pegram's Corps Commander. Pegram wrote his feelings on the tragedy to his sister Mary:

There is quite a gloom over the army today, at the news of Jackson's death. We never knew how much we all loved him until he died. His death will not have the effect of making our troops fight any worse. Besides being the bravest troops in the world, they have the most unbounded confidence in their great leader Gen. Lee. It is feared that the Yankee troops will fight better, since they will not hear any more that Jackson is in their rear...Our troops will fight well under any body. Fortunately with us, the soldiers make the officers, and not the officers the soldiers... Every one here looks to A. P. Hill as the man to fill his place and after he once gets a show, the enemy will fear him as much as they ever feared Jackson.<sup>23</sup>

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20. O. G. Chamberlayne, Ham Chamberlayne-Virginia, p. 176.

21. John Mumford to his cousin Sallie Mumford, May 14, 1863, from Camp near Hamilton's Crossing, Virginia, (Mumford-Ellis Papers).

22. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Hag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 15.

23. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, May 11, 1863, from Camp near Hamilton's Crossing, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers).

The Army of Northern Virginia was reorganized after the Battle of Chancellorsville, and Hill was given a newly formed III Corps. Longstreet would command the I Corps, and Richard S. Ewell was given the II Corps.<sup>24</sup> As a result of a recommendation by A.P. Hill, Colonel Lindsay Walker was promoted to Chief of the III Corps Artillery, and Major William Pegram became the Commander of Walker's Battalion, known thereafter as "Pegram's Battalion."<sup>25</sup>

Battle of

## II. GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN (June 2-July 4, 1863)

After the Chancellorsville, Lee felt that he must take the war into the enemy's territory. On the morning of June 3rd, 1863, McLaw's Division left its camp and started for Culpeper, Virginia. Several days later the First and Second Corps were on the move North.<sup>26</sup> A. P. Hill's Third Corps was left at Fredericksburg to observe the movements of Hooker's Army, but since the latter made no threatening moves, his Corps began leaving for the Valley of Virginia on June 15, 1863.<sup>27</sup>

Pegram's Battalion had been stationed at Hamilton's Crossing, but Major Pegram became ill with fever on June 11th. and could not accompany his men into Pennsylvania. Following a brief visit with a Mr. Marye (probably that of Capt. A. E. Marye, who commanded the Fredericksburg Battery in Pegram's Battalion), he went to Richmond to await full recovery.<sup>28</sup> The men of his battalion missed him as they

24. Official Records, Series I, Vol XXV, Part II, pp. 810-827.

25. Ibid., pp. 580, 850, 859.

26. Ibid., pp. 840, 844, 848, 850; D. S. Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, pp. 18-28.

27. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part II, pp. 299, 610; Ibid, Part III, pp. 869, 890.

28. John Mumford to his cousin Sallie Mumford, June 12, 1863, Camp near Fredericksburg, Virginia (Mumford-Ellis Papers).

marched into enemy country. Ham Chamberlayne, in a letter from Berryville, Virginia to his mother dated June 23rd., said, "Give my love to Willy P. I hope he will be here shortly." In another letter written to his mother from Shepherdstown, dated June 25th., Chamberlayne said, "Let me know always how Willy P. is, and let him know when you hear from me, and where we are-He must be anxious to hear...Tell him we need him, but he must be careful not to come before he is well; there is stage comm<sup>n</sup> (communication) between Staunton and Winchester he must come that way."<sup>29</sup>

Pegram, apparently anxious to be with the army on its mysterious mission, left Richmond prior to June 28, 1863.<sup>30</sup> He rode the last ninety miles in an ambulance, since he had not completely regained his strength. On June 30th., he overtook Hill's Corps at Cashtown, Pennsylvania. His battalion was pleased by his unexpected appearance. Lee met him upon his arrival and shortly after said to A. R. Hill, "I have good news for you. Major Pegram is up." Hill answered, "Yes, that is good news."<sup>31</sup>

On June 30th., General Harry Heth ordered General Johnston J. Pettigrew's Brigade to Gettysburg to obtain some shoes; however, Pettigrew returned without entering the town. Some of the men had heard the beat of drums, "indicating infantry" on the other side of town. Heth said to Hill, "If there is no objection, I will march my division tomorrow, go to Gettysburg and secure those shoes." Hill replied, "Do so."<sup>32</sup>

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29. G. G. Chamberlayne, Ham Chamberlayne-Virginian, pp. 187-90.

30. Sallie Mumford to John Mumford, June 29, 1863, from Richmond, Virginia, (Mumford-Ellis Papers).

31. W.C. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 16; D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 179, note.

32. Harry Heath Memoirs, Chapter XIX, pp. 145-46.

The next morning, July 1, 1863, Heth moved his division out at five o'clock for Gettysburg. Everything was normal until they were within about three miles of the town. Blue Vedettes were encountered, but they retired shortly.<sup>33</sup> On reaching the range of hills overlooking Willoughby Run, which is about a mile and a half northwest of Gettysburg, there was every indication that the enemy was present, but no definite line was in view.<sup>34</sup> Pegram's Battalion was on the ground. This Heth reported, "Whenever I was going into battle, I always applied for Colonel Pegram's Battalion of artillery to accompany me." Pegram was ordered to fire at the woods in his front for half of an hour and see if he could get a response, but no response was obtained," but with these shots began the Battle of Gettysburg.<sup>35</sup> With General J. J. Archer's Brigade deployed on the right and General Joseph R. Davis's Brigade on the left of the Cashtown Road, Heth ordered them forward. Pegram's Battalion was to Support Archer. These brigades went to Willoughby Run and started up the opposite hill, driving General John Buford's Union Cavalry before them; however, Union reinforcements came up just in time to overwhelm the Confederates, and Archer was captured.<sup>36</sup> Two of Davis's Regiments were captured in a railroad cut on the left and Heth lost 2,300 men in this action. Pegram and McIntosh's fire possibly saved Heth's division from complete destruction.<sup>37</sup>

General Heth's report on the efforts of Pegram's Battalion stated:

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33. Ibid., Chapter XIX, p. 146; Official Records, Series I. Vol. XXVII, Part II, p. 317.

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34. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part II, p. 637.

35. Harry Heth Memoirs, Chapter XIX, p. 146.

36. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part I, pp. 155, 245, 646, 674.

37. Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part II, p. 611.

At the same time that it would afford me much gratification, I would be doing but justice to the several batteries of Pegram's battalion in mentioning the assistance they rendered during this battle...My thanks are particularly due to Major Pegram for his steady cooperation. He displayed his usual coolness, good judgment, and gallantry.<sup>38</sup>

On the morning of July 2nd., the Pegram's Battalion together with the other artillery batteries moved to Seminary Hill. The twenty pieces of Pegram's Battalion were distributed in five batteries. The Battalion, which was stationed a little left of center on the line, July 2nd. was a day of much activity. The Union artillery concentrated on Lee's right when Longstreet made his charges in the "Wheat Field" and on "Devil's Den", and Pegram's guns answered.<sup>39</sup>

On July 3, Pegram's Battalion shelled the Federal lines for one hour and forty minutes prior to Pickett's Charge. On the morning of July 4, Lee began a retreat back to Virginia. Pegram's Battalion had lost during the entire campaign: ten of his men were killed; thirty-seven were wounded; and one was missing; making a total casualty list of forty-eight. As to losses in men, this ranks the Pegram Battalion fourth out of Lee's fifteen battalions engaged at Gettysburg.<sup>40</sup>

Early in the winter of 1863-64, the Army of Northern Virginia took winter quarters on the right bank of the Rapidan River in Central Virginia. The Army of the Potomac, under General George Gordon Meade, took position on the left bank of that River. Outside of the fiasco at Bristoe Station in October, and some artillery dueling between the armies at Mine Run in December, no action of consequence occurred.

Because of illness, Major Pegram made a trip to Richmond in the month of September, 1863, and while there, saw the troops of Longstreet's corps pass through the city in route to strengthen General Braxton Bragg in Georgia. He commented in

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38. Ibid., Series I. Vol. XXVII, Part II, pp. 609-11.

39. Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part II, pp. 2, 677-79, 699; Bradford, Ned G. (ed.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1956), 343, 362, note; D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 164-65.

40. Official Records, XXIX, Part I, p. 896.

a letter to his sister Mary on September 10, that "there is a great deal of mystery about the movement but as Gen. Lee seems to be at the bottom of it all, it must be all right."<sup>41</sup>

After a skirmish at Mine Run, Virginia in early December, Lee's Army moved into permanent winter quarters near Gordonsville. The Pegram Battalion camped near Cobhan's and Lindsay's Depots on the Virginia Central Railroad in Albemarle County.<sup>42</sup> From this camp, he wrote his sister Mary on December 16, 1863. He expressed a desire that he might make the best use of this time of inactivity. "I look forward to passing the most of the time reading and studying. I have felt keenly during the past twelve months my ignorance...", and he would endeavor to make up for lost time, "But I cannot entirely do this, for it will take several years after the war is over." Ever a conscientious student, Pegram continued with concern: "If I can only keep my mind in training, so that when the war is over, I will not have a distaste for books, I shall think I am doing well." In the same letter, he expressed his opinion on the political significance that the 1864 campaigns must take on. "We must get a large number of men in the field by Spring, and have a successful campaign in the Summer and Fall. Lincoln's term of office and the power of the war party depends upon the campaign of 1864."<sup>43</sup>

Any soldier might testify to the boredom that can ensue in a static camp. Pegram, for one, felt the depression of inactivity. Apparently hard campaigning made him feel a need for diversion. In a letter to Mary, dated February 11, 1864, he wrote that he wanted to visit Richmond "entirely for pleasure". The September

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41. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, September 10, 1863, from Richmond, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.

42. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, p. 1039.

43. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, December 16, 1863, from Camp near Gordonsville, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.



trip had been overshadowed by his own illness and his deep concern for his battalion. "I never felt more in the mood for recreation, too, I don't think I ever worked as hard in my life as during this past five months," he continued. He states further in this communication, that the chief problem of an artillery officer is in obtaining sufficient horses and then keeping them up. "Mine, unfortunately, are at this time in low order", he said, "and I have lost many, owing to an epidemic among them. General Lee regards the horses above everything else."<sup>44</sup>

Pegram apparently loved a fight. He would rather be campaigning than idle. In the February 11th letter to his sister Mary, he said: "I am exceedingly tired of winter quarters, and shall be delighted when the Spring Campaign opens. I wish that when active operations once commence, they could continue until the war is brought to an end. Camp is getting to be insufferable. The music of a shell would be delightful." He saw some benefit from this circumstance, however, in that "this idleness may have a good effect in disgusting all our soldiers with camp life, and make them more zealous to conquer the peace." The concern of Pegram was not limited to his own plight, however, for he expressed interest in the moral problems of his home town. "Richmond must be getting fearfully corrupt. I am afraid that a great many formerly good people are being contaminated." He condemns the "bad taste and hard-hearted" for their conduct of engaging in dances and festivities. Half mourn while the other half plan. I fear that God will not favor us as long as such is the case. I hope that the season of Lent will put a stop to it." Pegram returns in this letter to a grave concern of his, when he explained to his sister in a disappointment that the Purcell Battery refused as a whole to re-enlist. "Three companies did so." He continued:

The fifth, the Purcell Battery, I am sorry to say, would not do so, with a few exceptions, on account of some dissatisfaction with some of their officers. I am still in hopes, however that they will come around in a day or two. Men in the ranks are like children, and

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<sup>44</sup>. William J. Pegram to his sister, Mary, February 11, 1864, from Camp near Lindsay's, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2.

when they take up whims, it is hard to get them out of them. My battery is composed of three different companies, and I think this accounts for the dissatisfaction. They have an excellent set of officers. The old men that are left are all, I believe, in favor of reenlisting, and they all say that they will fight as hard for the cause as ever. I shall certainly give them the first opportunity for showing this.<sup>45</sup>

The men of the Purcell did reenlist in a few days, for General R. E. Lee, reporting on February 15, 1864, from Orange Court House to General Samuel Cooper, Adjutant General of the Army of the Confederate States of America, said, "The following troops have re-enlisted for the war... and Pegram's battalion of artillery..."<sup>46</sup>

### III. WILDERNESS, TO COLD HARBOR (May 4-June 3, 1864)

In the Spring of 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant was named Commander-in-Chief of all the Union Armies. He came from the West, where he had won victories, to work in with General George Gordon Meade, who remained in command of the Army of the Potomac. This army of about 116,000 men began crossing the upper fords of the Rappahannock River on May 4, 1864.<sup>47</sup> Of all arms, the Confederate effective strength was approximately 64,000.<sup>48</sup> The action which Major Pegram had desired during the winter months, began on May 5, 1864, and from this time there was little rest.<sup>49</sup> An evaluation of the role the artillery played from the Wilderness at Petersburg is given by Jennings G. Wise. He said:

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45. Ibid., Box 2.

46. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXIII, Part I, p. 1173.

47. Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, pp. 18, 168.

48. E. P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p. 497.

49. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, p. 539.

From the day of the rapid concentration of artillery along the Rapidan on the 5th of May, there was never an hour when every battery of Lee's Army was not either in position, in immediate support, or on the march and actually with the infantry divisions. Not one single instance of delay in the movement of the artillery, or of a single battery, had been encountered, for the simple reason that the leaders of the war had developed, always enabled the batteries to be in the first line.<sup>50</sup>

At the Battle of the Wilderness, Confederate forces on May 6 halted the Federal advance. According to reports, Pegram's Battalion fired in support at the Widow Tapp's Farm, and aided in halting the Federals, when they attempted to "penetrate between Ewell and Hill." Grant moved to his left after the Battle of the Wilderness, in an attempt to reach Spotsylvania Court House before the Confederates. Lee, using another route, engaged him one and a half miles from the Court House on the morning of May 8th. Pegram's Battalion was placed across the Fredericksburg Road, several hundred yards beyond the Court House.<sup>51</sup> The enemy made an attack on this part of the line on May 10th, coming "within thirty paces of my breastworks", according to Harry Heth, and "They were exposed to the raking fire of my artillery... where I had some twenty pieces in position behind the epaulments." These guns were Pegram's, and Heth said they were well handled, "using grape and canister on the attacking force...B urnside made three assaults...each was repulsed with great loss..."<sup>52</sup> In the official report, it is stated that Pegram "opened on them with vigor and speedily drove them back to the cover of their trenches."<sup>53</sup>

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50. J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, p. 833.

51. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, pp. 1040, 1045, 1056; Harry Heth Memoirs, Chapter XX, p. 156.

52. Harry Heth Memoirs, Chapter XX, pp. 157-58; J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, p. 800.

53. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, p. 238.

In May Meade made an assault on Lee's line in front of Spotsylvania Court House. He placed a number of batteries in position from which Hill's Corps could be enfiladed. He attempted to advance a large number of guns under the cover of their fire, to prepare for a large scale infantry attack. It was the batteries of Pegram's and Cutts' that "...bore the brunt of the furious cannonade, which ensued during the next hour, and succeeded in silencing the more advanced batteriest of the enemy, which caused the attack to be abandoned,"<sup>54</sup>

Before 9 a.m. on May 21, General Lee knew that Grant was moving toward Bowling Green and Millford. Lee moved his Three Corps out of the Spotsylvania lines and headed south for the North Anna River. On May 22nd. he arrived at the North Anna River, and the next day repelled an attack on the left, at Jericho Ford, by the Union Fifth Corps. Hill's Corps contested its attempt to cross the river. The guns of Pegram and Poague advanced under the cover of rising ground until they were in good supporting distance of the infantry. As the Confederates moved out to attack, these batteries, heretofore unseen, moved to the crest of the hill and opened fire on the enemy's reserves at the ford. The Federal artillery engaged in a duels with Pegram and Poague, who had meanwhile thrown the Federal reserves massed near the left into disorder.<sup>55</sup> Of the original one hundred and twenty-five cannoneers in Pegram's Purcell Battery "... who had blithely entrained for Aquia Creek in April, 1861, only five were left at Jericho Ford...One of the five fell on that...field."<sup>56</sup>

On the 27th, the entire Union Army was in motion, marching by its left flank in an attempt to interpose itself between Lee and Richmond.<sup>57</sup> By the 29th,

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54. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part III, pp. 77, 801; J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, p. 800; Harry Heth Memoirs, Chapter XX, pp 157-58.

55. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part III, pp. 77, 801; Part I, p. 823; J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, p. 805.

56. William G. Stanard (ed.), "Proceedings of the Virginia Historical Society on March 17, 1917 at its Annual meeting", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXV, (December, 1917), pp. xcci-cccl.

57, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, p. 1074, 1031.

the two armies were in the vicinity of Totopotomoy Creek. On May 31st the armies were moving into the Cold Harbor area.<sup>58</sup> During the battles at Cold Harbor, June 1, 2, 3, 1864, Pegram's Battalion was in action. It held the last artillery position on the extreme right of the Confederate line, which was known as Turkey Hill. When the Union infantry charged that section of the line on June 1 and 2, the guns of Pegram's Battalion aided in repulsing the<sup>59</sup>

Because of previous service, on June 10, 1864, the Confederate Congress passed the recommendation that commissioned him to Lieutenant Colonel of Artillery. It was to date from February 27, 1864.<sup>60</sup>

After Grant's attacks at Cold Harbor, Lee awaited his adversary's next move.<sup>61</sup> However, on the morning of June 13, 1864, Lee received word from his skirmishers that the Union lines were empty.<sup>62</sup> He immediately ordered his First and Third Corps across the Chickahominy and they moved toward Riddell's Shop. Pegram's Battalion was in the advance with McIntosh's, and they, together, in a minor engagement with Wilcox's division, relieved the Cavalry at Riddell's Shop,<sup>63</sup>

#### IV. SIEGE OF PETERSBURG (June 14-April 1, 1865)

By the evening of June 17, 1864, Lee was assured that Grant was heading for Petersburg.<sup>64</sup> Grant had changed his strategy from one of maneuver to that

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58. Ibid., Part III, p. 858.

59. J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, pp. 822, 834.

60. Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865, IV, pp. 86, 100, 217.

61. Official Records, Series I, Vol. LI, Part II, p. 1003; Ned G. Bradford (ed.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, p. 219.

62. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I, p. 1035.

63. Ibid., Part III, pp. 1059-60; J. C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, p. 835.

64. D. S. Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, p. 421.

of siege. For the next ten months the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac faced each other at Petersburg. During this time, Pegram wrote a letter to his sister Mary, expressing his personal feelings in regard to General R. E. Lee, and the confidence he had in him. "My confidence in Genl. Lee increases daily, and I think our cause more than ever, under Providence, dependent upon him." General Grant had control of all the Union Armies at this time, and Pegram believed Lee "...should certainly have entire control of all military operations throughout the Confederate States." Pegram goes a bit further when he said, "In fact I should like to see him King or Dictator. He is one of the few men who ever lived, who could be trusted."<sup>65</sup>

There were numerous engagements between the two armies during the period of siege of Petersburg, and Pegram saw action in many of them. In August he aided the divisions of Heth and Mahone in attacking the Federals on the Weldon Railroad, three miles west of Petersburg. On August 18, Grant tried to seize the Weldon Railroad by gradually extending his left. He was prevented in this attempt by Heth's Division and Brander's Battery of Pegram's Battalion. The next day Mahone's Division and Pegram's Battalion joined Heth to renew the attack. In this action, the Federals lost nearly 3,000 prisoners, and Pegram with Heath, bore the brunt of the battle. Again, on August 21, Pegram, with twelve guns, was heavily engaged at Poplar Spring Church, where Mahone, attacking with six small brigades, failed to dislodge the enemy. He had met an entire Union Corps which was strongly entrenched, and the various approaches to the Union position were covered by artillery.

Three days later, Pegram, with Brander's and Cayce's batteries of his own battalion, accompanied Heth's Division in its attack upon the Union Troops at Ream's Station. They captured twelve stands of colors, nine pieces of artillery, ten caissons, 2,150 prisoners, and 3,100 muskets; however, they lost 720 men in the

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65. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, July 21, 1864, from Petersburg, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

action. Heth's infantry was impressive, but he did not believe they could have carried the enemy's works without the aid of Pegram's guns which first softened the adversary. "To Colonel Pegram", said General Heth, "I measuredly owed my success at Ream's Station."<sup>66</sup> General William Nelson Pendleton, the Chief of Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia reported that, "Success was marked on this occasion, and due in no small degree to the efficiency of Colonel Pegram and the good conduct of his officers and men."<sup>67</sup>

Pegram's close friend, Ham Chamberlayne, was evidently anxious to be a part of such actions, and writing to his mother on August 27, 1864, said:

In the last of these affairs, Thursday 25th, Willy Pegram especially distinguished himself and the arm which he direct...I rejoice with him, notwithstanding a natural envy at the luck which gives him all the hot places and chances for helping on the cause and making a name at the same time.<sup>68</sup>

Pegram saw action again on September 30. Heth's and Wilcox's Divisions were attempting to recover some rifle pits on the Confederate right. Samuel McGowan's South Carolina Brigade was retreating under enemy fire when Pegram spurred his horse through the line of battle, snatched the battleflag from the color-bearer and rode with it towards them, shouting, " 'Follow me men!' " With a rousing yell, the brigade closed on the colors and held their ground. The young color bearer approached Pegram, saying, " 'Give me back my colors, Colonel! I'll carry them wherever you say.' " " 'Oh, I'm sure of that,' " answered Pegram cheerily, handing over the flag. " 'It was necessary to let the whole line see the colors, that's the only reason I took them.' "<sup>69</sup>

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66. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLII, Part I, pp. 851, 939, 936; Ibid., Part II, pp. 1199-1200, 1228 ff; Harry Heth Memoirs, Chapter XXI, p. 166.

67. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLII, Part I, p. 858.

68. C. G. Chamberlayne, Ham Chamberlayne-Virginian, p. 264.

69. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 17.

The next day, October 1, Pegram received a slight wound in the leg from a minie-ball while riding along the skirmish line. He refused to leave the field during the fight, despite the advice of General Heth and his own officers, and he would not apply for leave of absence afterwards,<sup>70</sup>

In the latter part of October, 1864, there was some discussion of making Pegram a Brigadier General of Infantry. General Harry Heth believed he needed some one of Pegram's ability to command the consolidated Brigades Archer and Field, and shortly thereafter General Richard H. Anderson, knowing nothing of this, recommended that one of his brigades be given to him. Heth's recommendation was forwarded to Army Headquarters by Lieutenant General A. P. Hill with this endorsement: "No officer in the Army of Northern Virginia has done more to deserve this promotion than Lieutenant Colonel Pegram."<sup>71</sup> Lee confronted Heth on the subject. "He is too young—how old is Colonel Pegram?", Lee asked. He answered, "I do not know, but I suppose about twenty-five." Lee replied, "I think a man of 25 as good as he ever will be; what he acquires after that age is from experience; but I can't understand, when an officer is doing excellent service where he is, why he should want to change."<sup>72</sup> On October 28, 1864, Pegram wrote a letter to his mother, in which he tells her of his promotion. He wrote:

I know it will gratify you, as much or more than it does me, because I feel confident of my unworthiness and the responsibility which I will have in case it goes through. General Archer recently died. Generals Heth and Hill applied to have me made Brigadier and placed in command of the Brigade. I think it very probable, however, that it will not meet with Gen. Lee's approval, on account of my age, and on account of his objection to irregular promotions, i.e. promoting

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70. Ibid., XIV, p. 17.

71. Ibid.; D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 672.

72. Harry Heth Memoirs, chapter XXI, p. 166.



...officers from one branch of the service into another. Gen. Heth told me this morning that he thought it would go through...<sup>73</sup>

It is evident in this letter that Pegram was pleased that he was recommended for promotion. "If I get it," he continued, "I will take it with fear and trembling, trusting in God's guidance and mercy, and constantly praying to Him for help." He expressed the hope that his brother John would also be promoted. "I am sincerely hope that before I am promoted to that grade...Brother will be made Major-Genl. for otherwise I shall not believe that they ever promoted according to merit. I know that he has as much military, and all other sense, in one minute, as I have in a year."<sup>74</sup> The recommendations were returned with the endorsement that, "The artillery could not lose the services of so valuable an officer."<sup>75</sup> After the war, when General Lee was President of Washington College at Lexington, Virginia, Gordon McCabe wrote to him inquiring about the recommendations that had been made by various general officers for the assignment of Pegram to brigade command. Lee assured him it wasn't for lack of competence on Pegram's part that he was not promoted.<sup>76</sup>

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73. William J. Pegram to his mother, October 28, 1864, from camp near Petersburg, Virginia (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box.

74. Ibid.

75. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 17.

76. A. C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, pp. 175-76; "A biographical Sketch of William Ransome Johnson Pegram" by Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor, Pegram Family Papers.

Lexington, Va., 9 Feb. 1870

W. Gordon McCabe, Eqr.  
Petersburg, Va.

Dear Sir:

I do not recollect ever having rec'd recommendations from Gen'l's Anderson and Heth for the assignment of Col. W. J. Pegram to the command of Brigades in their Divisions. If I did, they were not denied for want of confidence in his ability, for no one in the Army had a higher opinion of his gallantry and worth than myself.

During the latter part of January, 1865, Lieutenant Colonel Pegram became ill, and he went to his home in Richmond. While confined to bed, he heard from his brother John through a letter written to his mother, "I trust Willy is well, but if he is not, do not let him come back to the Army, for nothing is doing just at this time. Genl. Lee told me yesterday he sent Willy's name up for promotion in the Artillery, and expressed an earnest wish that Willy's health might be restored." <sup>77</sup> No doubt John wanted to make sure that William didn't leave his sick-bed prematurely as he had done in June, 1863, when he hurried to follow the army into Pennsylvania. Three days after this letter was written, Brigadier General John Pegram was killed at the Battle of Hatcher's Run. <sup>78</sup>

Ram Chamberlayne, writing home to his mother on February 13, 1865 said, "Willy P. is still in Richmond sick, slow bilious fever-His promotion to Brig. Genl. hangs fire." <sup>79</sup>

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They were conspicuous on every field. Officers were sometimes recommended for the command of brigades when there were none to which they could be properly assigned, and in such cases, the recommendation could not be considered. Col. Pegram had the command of a fine battalion of artillery, a service in which he was signally skillful, in which he delighted, and in which I understood that he preferred to remain. I do not think under the circumstances that he would have considered the command of a brigade in 1865 as preferable to the position he held.

Very truly yours,

R. E. Lee

In "A Biographical Sketch of William Ransom Johnson Pegram" The Pegram Family Papers, Mrs. Arthur Scrivener states that: After the war, John S. Wise said on one occasion, "General Lee, while undemonstrative in most things, regarded Willie Pegram, as everybody called him, with undisguised affection and pride."

77. John Pegram to his mother, February 3, 1865, from the Petersburg Trenches, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 2

This reveals that promotion of Pegram to infantry command was still rumored among the soldiers; however, Pegram was commissioned by an Act of the Confederate Congress to Colonel of Artillery as of February 18, 1865.<sup>80</sup> Pegram was back in the Petersburg trenches by March 10, 1865, when he wrote to his sister Jennie, "My commission of Colonel of Artillery has arrived at Army Hd. Qrs., and I will probably receive it tomorrow."<sup>81</sup>

With the joy of promotion, Pegram had to bear the sorrow of his brother's death. It had been a shock to the family and the army as well. "Whenever I meet any one of Brother's friends, whom I have not seen, " he wrote to his sister Mary, "my grief breaks out afresh...I do not like to annoy anyone here with expression of grief, & it is such a relief to be able to give utterance to someone who sympathizes with me."<sup>82</sup> Pegram's Adjutant, Gordon McCabe took note of his sorrow, and said after the war, "The last few months of his life were inexpressibly saddened by the death of his noble brother,... who fell at the head of his division....but as the days grew darker...for 'the cause', like a true soldier he put aside his own grief to speak cheering words to those about him."<sup>83</sup>

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78. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I, p. 381.

79. C. G. Chamberlayne, Ham Chamberlayne-Virginian, p. 309.

80. Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865, IV, p. 612.

81. William J. Pegram to his sister Jennie, March 10, 1865, from Camp near Petersburg, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

82. William J. Pegram to his sister Mary, March 14, 1865, from Camp near Petersburg, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

83. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 18.

V. FIVE FORKS  
(April 1, 1865)

On Wednesday night, March 29, 1865, Colonel Pegram and his Adjutant, Captain Gordon McCabe, went to Battery Gregg to have tea with their close friend, Captain Ham Chamberlayne. Shortly thereafter, a courier from headquarters brought orders from Brigadier General Lindsay Walker, Chief of Artillery for the Third Corps. Pegram was directed to report by daylight to Lieutenant General Richard H. Anderson at Burgess' Mill with 20 pieces of artillery. He and McCabe slept for two hours, but were in the saddle before daylight, riding in a driving rain to fulfill Walker's orders. By daylight, Thursday, March 30, 1865, Pegram reported to General Anderson. It was still raining, and he and McCabe went to the front lines. They saw Lee and Heth riding together along the lines, and Lee did not appear to be in a good humour.<sup>84</sup> The Commanding General had sufficient reason to appear in such a mood, since it was reported that the enemy, with infantry, cavalry, and artillery, was concentrating on the extreme right between Dinwiddie Court House and Five Forks.<sup>85</sup> Pegram sent his guns to the lines to await further orders, and then joined Lee and Heth on the front. Later, Pegram and McCabe went into an abandoned cabin to read their Bibles. Following this time of devotion, Colonel Pegram joined General Lee again, and together they "rode down toward the enemy to reconnoitre." The rain was still coming "down in torrents."<sup>86</sup>

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84. A.C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, p. 163.

85. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I, pp. 1102, 1122, 1263; E.P. Alexander, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, p. 591; W.G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of the Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 18.

86. A.C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, p. 163; Walter Harrison, Fickett's Men, A Fragment of War History (New York, 1870), pp. 142-43; D.S. Freeman, R.E. Lee, IV. p. 31; A. C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, p. 163

At approximately 11 a.m., Pegram received orders to move with six guns to the extreme right near the Southside Railroad with Pickett's Virginia Division to assist General Fitzhugh Lee, who was fighting General Philip H. Sheridan's Cavalry. Pegram moved immediately although the roads were almost impassable, the men were hungry, the odds were frightful.<sup>87</sup> General Pickett did not push ahead rapidly, and the flank was "harassed...with small bodies of cavalry without intermission." Pickett took time to halt, form line-of-battle, and await the enemy's attack. "Much valuable time was lost in this way," according to Gordon McCabe, and "a line of skirmishers marching on our flank would have been ample protection." Colonel Pegram rode ahead of the infantry with his artillery to form a juncture with the cavalry. The enemy occupied the roads before and behind them, but the woods through which they were passing were thick enough to conceal the column. Pegram reached Five Forks about 4:30 P.M. on March 30, 1865, and the enemy, having been driven by the 7th. Virginia Infantry, occupied a field beyond the woods to Pegram's left. His men were "in splendid spirits," and Colonel Pegram, with his Adjutant at his side, "rode out into the field and saw their (the enemy's) videttes. They fired at us repeatedly, but their aim was not very accurate." It cleared off about sundown, and Pegram's cannoners without blankets or food, went into camp at Five Forks about dusk, "wet, hungry, cold, and sleepy."<sup>88</sup>

About 10:00 A.M., Friday, March 31, 1865, the Confederates moved from Five Forks against the Federals, and there was skirmishing all day. By the time the Southerners were within a half a mile of Linwiddle Court House, it was dark and a halt was called.<sup>89</sup>

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87. D.S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 658.

88. A.C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, pp. 163-64.

89. Walter Harrison, Pickett's Men. A Fragment of War History, pp. 144-45; Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I, p. 819 ff.

The artillery was started for Five Forks about 2 A.M., April 1, 1865, and "had an uneventful wade through the spring mud and by sunrise parked on the ground they had occupied before the march to Dinwiddie Court House." <sup>90</sup> The artillerists found no rations, and they took from their horses, some of the animal's corn. Parching it over the fire, it had to suffice for breakfast. <sup>91</sup>

The Confederate Infantry reached Five Forks during the forenoon of April 1, 1865, and was placed in line to secure Lee's extreme right. It had to be held, or else the Federals would have a clear route to his right and rear. Six of Pegram's guns were placed at the most strategic position. <sup>92</sup> Sometime after 4 P.M., Union General Phil Sheridan's Cavalry, reinforced with 15,000 men of Warren's Fifth Corps, moved against the positions of Pickett, Fitzhugh, Lee, and Pegram. Warren's Corps turned the Confederate left flank at Five Forks, which was some four miles from the main line at Burgess's Mill. Warren reported that he captured 3,244 men, 11 stands of colors, and 4 guns. <sup>93</sup> This was the first time an enemy had captured any of his artillery.

At Five Forks, Pegram lost his guns, and his life. On April 4, 1865, Captain W. Gordon McCabe wrote the details of the Colonel's wounding, death, and burial. After Pegram had posted his guns about 10 A.M., he and Gordon McCabe lay down at the foot of a tree, and Pegram fell asleep. When Warren's Fifth Corps launched its attack against the center, where Pegram had three guns, McCabe awakened him; they mounted their horses, and rode to supervise their guns. The enemy was

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90. D.S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 661

91. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I, p. 1264.

92. D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 661-64.

93. Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I, p. 831.

within 30 yards, and the fire was heavy. Pegram rode out between his guns and gave his last order: "Fire your canister low," and in the next moment fell from his horse, shot through the left arm and side. Oh! Gordon," he cried, "I'm mortally wounded, take me off the field." McCabe called an ambulance, and gave his last order to the batteries. They had to drive "through two parallel lines-of-battle of the enemy," to reach Ford's Depot on the Southside Railroad. When Pegram was being taken from the field, he took McCabe by the hand and said, "Tell my mother & sisters that I commend them to God's protection." <sup>94</sup> When the news of Pegram's wounding "flashed down the lines, scores of these (his) veterans broke down and sobbed like children." <sup>95</sup> "While in the ambulance", McCabe said, "I held him in my arms & prayed for him & kissed him over & over again." Once when McCabe prayed that his life might be spared, Pegram said, "If it is God's will to take me, I am perfectly resigned. I only wish life for my mother and sisters sake." At one point, Gordon cried out: "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me," and Pegram interrupted, "Don't say that Gordon, it isn't right..." I bent over him...& said..."Willie, I never knew how much I loved you until now." He pressed my hand & answered, 'But I did.' "I prayed for him, for comfort for body & soul, and he would simply say, 'Amen.' "The ambulance reached Ford's Depot about 10 P.M., and a bed was procured for the young Colonel at a Mr. Pegram's. He fell into a stupor about 2 A.M., April 2, 1865. "All alone with him...feeling...my impotence to help him, tho' I dressed his wounds as well as I knew how.." Colonel Pegram died without a struggle, on Sunday morning, April 2, 1865. Captain Gordon McCabe helped to dig his grave, "...laid him out in uniform...& read the service over

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94. William Gordon McCabe to Mary Pegram, April 4, 1865, from Bivouac in Amelia County, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

95. William G. Stanard (ed), "Proceedings of The Virginia Historical Society on March 17, 1917 at Its Annual Meeting", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXV, (December, 1917), p.xxxi.

him, as I knew he would have desired it." 96

It is interesting to note here that Colonel Pegram was mortally wounded at Five Forks, in Dinwiddie County, on land which was an original 450-acre grant to his ancestor, Robert Coleman, in 1665. In the Eighteenth Century, the mansion house was built. This tract was known as "Burnt Quarter" Plantation. These two events are two hundred years apart, to the year. 97

Speaking about the Battle of Five Forks and Pegram's death, Douglas Southall Freeman wrote: "His cause was dying with him." 98

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96. William Gordon McCabe to Mary Pegram, April 4, 1865, from Bivouac in Amelia County, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box, 1.

97. Mrs. Arthur Scrivenor, "A Biographical Sketch of William Ransom Pegram", Pegram Family Papers.

98. D.S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 674.



## CHAPTER IV.

### CONCLUSION

#### I. REINTERMENT IN HOLLYWOOD (December 6, 1865)

On Wednesday, December 6, 1865, the remains of Colonel William J. Pegram were removed from the inconspicuous grave in Dinwiddie County, and were taken to Richmond for reinterment in Hollywood Cemetery. Friends of the family wishing to attend the service were "invited to meet at the residence of his mother, Mrs. J. W. Pegram, in Linden Row, Franklin Street, at the time specified, "which was 10 o'clock A.M. <sup>1</sup> His obituary, which was printed in the Richmond Whig, read as follows:

...the whole community is stricken by the losses of the great strife through which we have passed, but little time or opportunity is given for special eulogy of the fallen, we cannot pass by the occasion without adding our tribute of respect to the memory of this gallant soldier and Christian gentleman. Conspicuous ever in the Army of Northern Virginia for his contempt of danger and fearlessness of death, he was no less noted for his simple and consistent piety, his genial manners and his warmth of friendship. <sup>2</sup>

The Daily Dispatch of Richmond reprinted a tribute to Colonel Pegram from the Norfolk Virginian;

He fell in the discharge of his duty, and died with the philosophy of a Christian and dignity of a soldier. He was one of the few men who have ever known equal to the heroic generosity of that gallant gentleman, who, dying in the Netherlands, gave his cup of water to the wounded man beside him. Pegram was capable of this. Peace to his ashes. <sup>3</sup>

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1. Richmond Whig, Richmond, Virginia, December 5, 1865.

2. Ibid.

3. Daily Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, December 9, 1865.

Colonel William J. Pegram was buried beside his older brother, Brigadier General John Pegram. Attached to their tombstones are the crossed sabres of the Brigadier and Colonel in facsimile. On the footstone of William's grave are the words from Hebrews 11:38 - "Of whom the world was not worthy."

## II. PEGRAM BATTALION ASSOCIATION

After the Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, Pegram's Battalion, as a fighting unit passed from existence. However several of his canoneers formally surrendered with Lee at Appomattox.<sup>4</sup>

Some years after the war, the survivors of Pegram's Command organized themselves into the Pegram Battalion Association. There are records of two reunions held in the years 1886 and 1887 in Richmond, Virginia.

During the Reunion of May 21, 1886, the Pegram Battalion Association met at Richmond in the Hall of the House of Delegates. At 8:30 P.M., the Association marched into the Hall to appropriate music. The place was filled with veterans and families, and relatives and friends of both living and dead members of the Battalion. Colonel Pegram's mother was there. "The Assembly" call was sounded on the bugle, after which the Reverend J. William Jones, D.D., Chaplain of the Association, offered prayer. Captain W. Gordon McCabe, former Adjutant of the Battalion, presented the old battle flag, in behalf of Colonel Pegram's mother, to the keeping of the Association with an historical address on the military career of Pegram and his Battalion. Major Thomas A. Brander, President of the Association, received the flag in behalf of the organization.

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4. "Parole List of the Army of Northern Virginia", Southern Historical Society Papers, XV, pp. 6,7,14,36,44, 45, 60, 454, 455, 457.

The band then played "Dixie", after which Major Brander took Pegram's sabre, to which a red ribbon had been tied (red trimming on a confederate uniform had designated artillery), held it up and said, "Here is the sword. I can't trust myself to speak about it." <sup>5</sup> Nothing could have been more eloquent. Truly McCabe's words had been poetically true, when he said, "Pegram, like Macduff, 'his voice was in his sword.'" <sup>6</sup>

The Pegram Battalion Association Reunion of May 31, 1887 met at the Soldier's Home in Richmond, Virginia to dedicate a memorial window at the Chapel in honor of Colonel William J. Pegram and the deceased members of his Battalion. A register with their names enscribed in it was deposited at the chapel. The names of the five batteries that had composed the Battalion are listed on the window, as follows:

"Purcell" - Battery of Richmond, Virginia  
 "Grenshaw" - Battery of Richmond, Virginia  
 "Letcher" - Battery of Richmond, Virginia  
 "Fredericksburg" - Battery of Fredericksburg, Virginia  
 "Pee Dee" - Battery of South Carolina

The address for this occasion was delivered by the Reverend H. Melville Jackson. His topic was "Religion - an Element of Strength in the Soldierly Character." <sup>7</sup>

In 1961, the first year of the Civil War Centennial, the Chapel at the Soldiers' Home was restored, and the memorial window to Pegram's Battalion remains in the west wall.

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5. "Pegram Battalion Association Reunion, May 21, 1886", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, pp. 5, 6; Ibid., XXVII, pp. 21, 22.

6. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of the Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 11

7. "Pegram Battalion Association Reunion, May 31, 1887", Southern Historical Society Papers, XVI, pp. 194-214

### III. AN EVALUATION

Perhaps the best evaluation of Colonel William Ransom Johnson Pegram has been provided in summary by the men who were his superiors, comrades, and subordinates.

"He was probably, at the time of his death, the most distinguished artillerist in our army," wrote Colonel John C. Haskell. "Pelham had been killed more than a year before, being the only officer in the artillery who stood higher, and he not in the estimation of all." Haskell further states that:

he was apparently as unfitted for army life as one could well be. Awkward in figure, so nearsighted as to be helpless without his glasses, a poor horseman (he could hardly distinguish the horse he rode for four years from any other)... and the better I knew him the greater my wonder was to see how he could overcome his natural defects. But he did; and altogether because he had a character and will that were grand, a sense of duty, never surpassed, and a determination to do his best, utterly regardless of his own safety or comfort...brought him into notice as a cool, desperate fighter, regardless of danger or odds, never thought of giving way, he stood as high, possibly higher, as any man in the army...He was one of the most earnest christians I ever met...<sup>8</sup>

Major Robert Stiles wrote of Pegram, "As a commander of an artillery battalion...he built up a reputation second to none for effective handling of his guns, his favorite method, where practicable, being a rush to close quarters with the enemy and open at the shortest possible range."<sup>9</sup>

A private who served in his battalion said, "There was a certain magnetism about Willie Pegram that impressed all who came into his presence... Never excited, possessing at all times that perfect equipoise so much prized in a commander, he embodied all the qualities of a soldier. While a strict disciplinarian, he was ever thoughtful of his men."<sup>10</sup>

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8. John C. Haskell, The Haskell Memoirs, edited by Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingwood, pp. 81-83.

9. Robert Stiles, Four Years under Marse Robert, p. 110.

10. J. C. Goolsby, "Col. William Johnson Pegram", VI (June, 1898) No. 6, p. 271. Confederate Veteran,

General Robert E. Lee had said of Pegram shortly after his death: "Faithful in every position he had filled - brave, zealous, intelligent, he added modesty, courtesy and piety to every manly virtue." <sup>11</sup> After the war, the General remarked: "No one in the Army had a higher opinion of his gallantry and worth than myself. They were conspicuous on every field." <sup>12</sup>

Although Gordon McCabe eloquently eulogized Colonel Pegram in his speech of May 21, 1886, to the Pegram Battalion Association Reunion, he admitted, "...He needs no panegyric, even when we have passed away, so long as men shall read the military reports of Hill, Jackson, and of Lee..." <sup>13</sup>

After considering all of the evidence provided in the various sources used in this study, this writer is persuaded that Colonel William Ransom Johnson Pegram during the war years of 1861-65 emerged as the greatest artillerist in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. He really never had but one rival for that position-Major John Pelham of Alabama. Doctor Douglass Southall Freeman substantiates their being ranked on the same level. <sup>14</sup> Major Pelham was killed mid way through the war, and the same competency which he displayed for those two years, was evident in the leadership of Colonel Pegram for four.

11. William Gordon McCabe to Mary Pegram, April 7, 1865, on retreat from Petersburg, Virginia, (Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers), Box 1.

12. A. C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, p. 175.

13. W. G. McCabe, "Presentation Address of the Old Battle Flag of Pegram Battalion", Southern Historical Society Papers, XIV, p. 11

14. D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 197.

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